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Next Generation Magazine

The Next Zelda
The First Screens

LIVE FROM TOKYO

PLAYSTATION 2 IS HERE!

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- First pix of PS2 games!
- First pix of the PS2 hardware!
- Exclusive! The Bouncer — *the best thing on PS2!*

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Namco's Reiko Nagase character demonstrates the kind of detail that can be animated in realtime, thanks to the power of PlayStation 2

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Dreamcast ■ Nintendo 64 ■ PlayStation ■ PC ■ Arcade ■ Online

Lifecycle 2 Vol1 #3

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Next Generation Magazine

At an eagerly attended press conference in Tokyo, Sony reveals the name, price, games, and strategy for its next-generation machine

30

PlayStation2 ARRIVES

PlayStation2 at a glance

Hardware specs	
Release date	3/4/00 (Japan)
Launch price	¥39800 ($390)
Dimensions	301mm (W) x 178mm (D) x 78mm (H), 2.1Kg
CPU	128-bit "Emotion Engine" @ 294.912 MHz
Memory	32 MB direct DRAM
GPU	"Graphics Synthesizer" @ 147.456 MHz
VRAM	4MB embedded on chip
Sound	SPU2, 48 hardware channels. 2MB audio RAM
Disc Drive	CD-ROM (24x), DVD-ROM (4x)
I/O	PlayStation CPU+ @ 33.86 or 36.86 MHz (selectable), 2MB I/O RAM
Interfaces	Controller port (x2), memory card slot (x2), AV multi-out, optical digital out, USB port (x2), i.Link (IEEE1394), PCMCIA slot (type III)

After months of speculation, the last of Sony's secrets about PlayStation2 were revealed to the world on September 13. Some were expected (the name, PlayStation2), some were surprising (the low launch price), and some were downright startling (the DualShock2 announcement).

While the mind-blowing specs of Sony's next-generation machine were released last March (see sidebar, above, if you need a refresher), many important features were revealed only just prior to Tokyo Game Show. The most immediate revelation was the name of the game: the pragmatic PlayStation2. A new "PS2" logo adorns the box, and creator Ken Kutaragi says he expects PS2 to become the informal term for the system.

The box itself is controversial: first impressions have been either love or hate, with very little middle ground. Designed by Sony hardware guru Mr. Goto, who also created the original PlayStation box as well as the VAIO PC, it is matte black with a post-industrial, asymmetrical design. Equipped with a sliding CD tray it can be used horizontally or, using an optional stand, in a tower configuration. According to Goto, the design is intended to mirror the universe: the black box represents space, while the blue and purple base is a metaphor for the earth. Overall, it's slightly smaller than PS1. The standard controller will be Space Black — picture black with a bit of subtle glitter thrown in and you've got the idea. As for us, having seen it up close — the pictures Sony has prewired simply do not do the unit justice — we love it. The design is consciously component-like: PS2 looks more like a VCR than it does a traditional game machine, but, especially in the tower configuration, it possesses a grace that is totally unique.

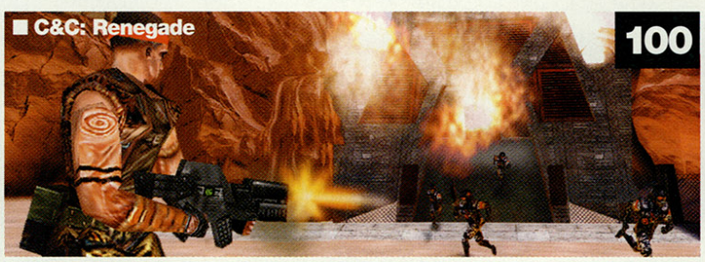
Given the planned power of PS2, many experts expected Sony to have trouble producing the chips that power the system both in quantity and at a reasonable price. While the company is almost certainly taking a loss on each unit, it has still managed to keep the launch price to ¥39800, the same launch price as PlayStation. As for quantities, the company promises that 1,000,000 machines will be available for the Japanese launch on March 4, 2000. (Those who

‡ Call us naïve, but for some reason, we always hoped Sony would make "Next Generation PlayStation" the permanent name of the system

■ Shigeru Miyamoto 108

■ Dreamcast launch 08

■ Drakan 122



■ C&C: Renegade 100

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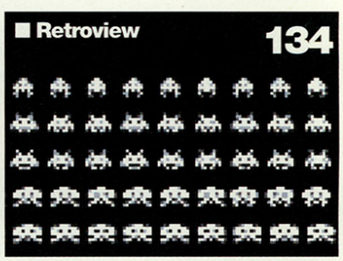

News

In a time of great change, you need news you can trust. Lucky thing we have some then, huh?

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Alphas

The hottest games you can't play yet

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Special

PlayStation 2 makes a grand entrance

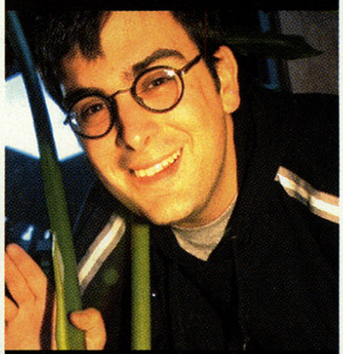
You *need* to know this: PS2 is officially unveiled at Tokyo Game Show, and we've got the full story on the hardware, the games, and Sony's big, *big* plans 30

Half-Life, *Zelda*, *Diablo*. They have one thing in common: none fit into neat categories. Are we seeing the death of the genre? ... 100

11/99

■ EDITORIAL

The talk of the town in Tokyo



It was hard to be in Tokyo this week on the 13th without hearing about PlayStation2 — never mind when I was at Sony's official announcement or Tokyo Game Show — Ken Kutaragi seemed to be on TV 24 hours a day, on news stations frequently interrupted by videogame commercials. Games are a more accepted part of the popular culture in Japan, but with the success of Dreamcast's launch, it seems that the US market is poised to make its first transition to a new generation of systems without the slump (don't say crash) that happened between 8- and 16-bit or 16- and 32-bit generations. That kind of continuity should go a long way toward helping games in the US get the kind of respect they deserve. PlayStation2 shouldn't hurt either — not only is it the best videogame system ever, but Sony has plans far beyond just selling the system to gamers: with DVD and broadband capabilities, PlayStation2 could be the machine that gets a game system in every house in America. The full report from Tokyo, including excerpts from an exclusive interview with Sony's Phil Harrison, starts on page 30.

Chris Charla

■ Zelda: Gaiden

■ Dead or Alive 2

■ Tony Hawk

Finals

Thirty-four featured reviews (whoa!) including:

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Ending

All good things much eventually cease

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News

Game industry news and analysis

■ In the event you haven't seen Sega's TV spot, this is a still from the commercial featuring a number of characters from Sega's launch line-up, presumably inside a Dreamcast (note the brain). Turn the page for a complete list of who's who

■ SAY GOODBYE, OLD BOY

Finally, Game Boy 2

After 12 years, the most successful game platform in history will get a successor

Although sales of Game Boy Color continue (Game Boy sells about three million units a year like clockwork), Nintendo has announced the upcoming Game Boy Advanced (not the final name). The new handheld will debut in Japan in August 2000, with a US launch following in time for the 2000 holiday season. No word on price yet, other than Nintendo's usual "aggressively priced for the mass market."

Game Boy Advanced will use a 32-bit RISC CPU, developed by the UK-based ARM Corporation (which, by the way, built the first RISC-based PC), and a color LCD screen capable of 240x160 pixel display. It uses two AA alkaline batteries, which Nintendo says should last about 20 hours per pair.

As with many Nintendo hardware products, some rather grand plans are in the works. Game Boy Advanced will be able to connect via cellular phone to the Internet for downloading software, multiplayer games, and access to chat and email. There are also plans for a digital camera, which would allow players to see who they're playing ("send a picture over the phone" gizmos are currently in vogue in Japan).

In addition, Nintendo has joined with Konami in a joint development house called Mobile 21 to develop software for the new system. Further, since some level of compatibility is planned between the new handheld and Nintendo's upcoming home console, Dolphin, Mobile 21 will also be involved in working out exactly how, and in what form, this interaction will be.

Lastly, Game Boy Advanced will have the Game Boy Color chip embedded into its architecture, thus ensuring compatibility with an entire dozen years' worth of Game Boy software, instantly giving the new system the largest game library on the planet at launch. Smart move.

NextGen

GAME BOY ADVANCED SPECS

CPU: memory-embedded 32-bit RISC
LCD: reflective TFT color LCD
Display Size: 40.8mmx61.2mm
Resolution: 240x160
Max. # of simultaneous colors: 65,000
Size: 80mm H x 135mm W x 25mm D
Power: two AA alkaline
Battery life: 20 hours
Weight: 140g

■ THE COUNTDOWN IS OVER...

We Have Lift Off!

Dreamcast launches to the tune of $97 million in first-day sales

If Sega has learned anything from its failed Saturn, it's how not to launch a system. With more than 15,000 retail stores across the nation stocking Dreamcast on 9/9/99, the system was anything but a surprise. Many gamers lined up outside the 400 stores nationwide that participated in a special midnight Dreamcast sale. With systems, VMUs, peripherals, and 18 launch titles all up for offer, Sega claims that total Dreamcast sales for the 24-hour period of 9/9/99 equaled $97,904,618.09.

WHO IS IT?

■ This English mathematician developed the first theory of a "universal computing machine," the benchmark test for artificial intelligence, and the first game-playing program.

400 stores nationwide participated in a special midnight Dreamcast sale

It was then that Sega's $100 million marketing push went into full effect. Not only was the system a prominent sponsor of the MTV music video awards, but Sega had several celebrities at midnight sales locales throughout the country. *Baywatch* star Donna D'Errico and Vern "Austin Powers Mini-Me" Troyer were in San Jose, Calif. at Software, Etc., while September *Playboy* cover girl Rena Mero (formerly Sable of the WWF) joined the Minnesota Vikings' Tony Williams and Dwayne Rudd in the Minneapolis FuncoLand. In Atlanta, *Baywatch* and *Silk Stalkings* star Mitzi Kapture joined the eager pre-order crowd.

But at the Electronic Boutique in the Las Vegas suburb of Henderson, Nevada, the crowd was the star attraction. Roughly 500 people who had pre-ordered the system lined up for the 12:01 a.m. rush. According to store manager Alex Dro Danielian, the last customer left at about 6:15 a.m., and the store reopened several hours later for its regular hours.

"We shattered the one-day sales record for one EB," said Danielian. "We moved over $160,000 worth of merchandise in that 24-hour period."

But couldn't that include some *Final Fantasy VIII* sales?

"Some people who actually only came in for *Final Fantasy VIII*," Danielian replies, "have purchased a Dreamcast."

Two days after the launch, Danielian explains there's still been a steady stream of business, and his store totaled more than 700 pre-sold units. Yet despite the overwhelming sales success, Dreamcast's launch hasn't been perfect. A run of bad software has triggered a fair number of returns. At deadline, the bad software was limited to *Ready 2 Rumble*, *Blue Stinger*, and *Sonic Adventure*, some copies of which would not even run.

Although the problem wasn't

■ Backstage at a recent Barenaked Ladies concert, BNL guitarist-singer Ed Robertson, who's also an avid **Next Generation** reader, receives a Dreamcast from Sega publicist Heather Hawkins. Robertson, a longtime gamer, recited the classic Konami code for us as well. (Thanks again for the passes, Ed)

■ A month before launch, Sega held a Dreamcast press summit at its US headquarters in San Francisco. For the event, locals entered a Sonic look-alike contest. The winner (unfortunately, not our photo subject) left with a Dreamcast and free first-party Sega games for life

widespread, it caused plenty of comments on Usenet. Yet Sega and retailers have been swift to respond. The bad run of *Sonic Adventure* GD ROMS was quickly narrowed down to a group of serial numbers. During his phone interview with **Next Generation**, Danielian explained that he was currently sorting a stack of *Sonic* games, looking for ones that worked while customers patiently waited.

Despite this minor setback, the first-day sales have brought a surge of positive energy to Sega. "Original projections were to sell 1 million consoles by the end of the year and 1.5 million by March 31, 2000," says Chris Gilbert, Sega's senior vice president of sales. "However, in light of the past 24 hours, we are now re-evaluating these forecasts."

While it's been known for some time that there were 300,000 pre-sales of Dreamcast, tripling the previous record set in 1995 by Sony for its North American PlayStation launch, Gilbert admits he didn't think the launch would be as big as it was.

"Our wildest expectations have been exceeded," Gilbert says, "and we believe this is only the beginning of a phenomenally successful run for Sega Dreamcast."

Sega's certainly now off to a good start, and with the holidays around the corner, there's no question the numbers will continue to rise. The company is certainly to be commended for the best launch (and launch line-up) on record. Sega has won a minor battle with consumers, specifically early adopters, and the company still has some time to build an installed base before Nintendo and Sony emerge from the furious mist of development with their own respective systems. But if anything's certain, it's that any momentum built in this industry is just as easily lost. Sega's going to have to keep moving, keep developers and publishers interested, and continue to introduce a variety of quality software to keep consumers and retailers happy. It has taken the first step. — *Tom Russo*

■ **The Electronics Boutique in Henderson, Nevada, shattered company sales records, as more than 500 people turned up at midnight to pick up their pre-ordered systems. One man arrived as early as 10 a.m. the morning of September 8**

IT IS...

■ **Alan Turing. The chess-playing program was too complicated for computers in the 1950s, so he ran the program in his head. It — unlike Turing — lost a lot.**

DATASTREAM

Car Naughty Dog's Andy Gavin drove during college, while working on *Way of the Warrior*: '90 Accord LX. Car he drove after selling *Way of the Warrior*: Lexus SE 300. Car he drove after finishing *Crash 3*: Mercedes 600SL. Car Naughty Dog's Jason Rubin drove before working on *Way of the Warrior*: "It was white, American, and had a fake convertible top. We called it the Ranchero." Car he had while working on *Way of the Warrior*: '91 Toyota Celica. Car he bought after selling *Way of the Warrior*: Toyota Supra Twin Turbo. Car he bought after *Crash 2* was finished: Ferrari 355 Targa. Car he drives to work: Toyota 4Runner. Why? Morgan, Naughty Dog's canine employee, "doesn't like the Ferrari." Source: Andy Gavin.

"Our wildest expectations have been exceeded, and this is only the beginning"

— Sega Senior VP of Sales, Chris Gilbert

Putting the Cast in Dreamcast

1. **Executioner** – House of the Dead 2
2. **Selene Strike** – Ready 2 Rumble
3. **Afro Thunder** – Ready 2 Rumble
4. **Sonic** – Sonic Adventure
5. **Taka-Arashi** – Virtua Fighter 3tb
6. **Sarah Bryant** – Virtua Fighter 3tb
7. **Zombie Ken** – House of the Dead 2
8. **Blazers' Brian Grant** – NBA 2K
9. **Slave Zero** – Slave Zero
10. **Lau Chan** – Virtua Fighter 3tb
11. **Tails** – Sonic Adventure
12. **Big the Cat** – Sonic Adventure
13. **Gun Rock** – Power Stone
14. **Zombie Randy** – House of the Dead 2
15. **Jim McMahon** – NFL 2K
16. **Judgment** – House of the Dead 2

■ Computer Artworks Ltd.'s *Evolva* running on GeForce 256. The spider creatures from the upcoming PC game are so detailed and smooth that they look almost sprite-based...

HARDCORE

About fifteen years ago, instead of playing with the other kids after school, I would go home and go to bed. Reason being, if I fired up my NES right after school, my mom would only let me play for two or three hours. If I set my alarm for 1 a.m., however, I could play for six hours straight until I had to get ready for school. With no volume, of course, and on a 13-inch black-and-white TV, but I didn't mind. About three months ago, I needed to start working more overtime. I was a technician for the telephone company, so I was spending 14 hours a day in a van. Staring at my steering wheel one night, I realized how I could still work late and manage to play all of the games I thought I wouldn't have time for. I bought a new PlayStation, a 4-inch color TV, and an AC/DC converter to power them both. The setup cost around $450 and took about two hours to install in the van, but I didn't mind.

savior@cybernex.net

■ THE BRAWN BEHIND THE BRAINS

NVIDIA's GeForce 256

Will the graphical heart of X-Box contend with PlayStation 2 and Dolphin?

As reported in the 10/99 issue of **Next Generation**, industry insiders from all corners of the industry are claiming that Microsoft has a new gaming console in the works, code-named X-Box. Powered by either an Intel Celeron or Pentium II/III, the graphics pipeline of X-Box will likely take the form of nVidia's GeForce 256 chip (formerly known as NV10). Here are some of the GeForce's advanced features:

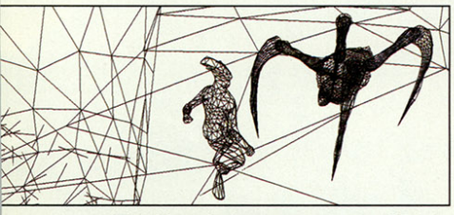
15 polygons/sec
480 million pixels/sec
- **32 samples per clock**
- **Full-speed 8-tap anisotropic filtering**

4 pixels per clock
1 GB/s CPU-to-GeForce memory via AGP 4X with Fast Writes
Hardware acceleration of the entire graphics pipeline: transform, lighting, setup, and rendering.

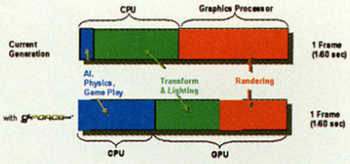
Robust support for DirectX 7 and OpenGL including:
- **Transform and lighting**
- **Cube environment mapping**
- **Projective textures**
- **Texture compression**

What makes nVidia's technology so exciting is that instead of just handling triangle setup and rendering (as is the case with every other consumer-level graphics accelerator), the GeForce additionally takes on transform and lighting responsibilities — thus enabling X-Box's processor to spend its time dealing with AI and advanced physics models instead of graphics. Unlike the Voodoo2 and upcoming geometry engines from other manufacturers, the GeForce delivers its geometry engine on one integrated chip.

At this point, Microsoft's X-Box, driven by the GeForce processor, will be in the same technical ballpark as Playstation 2 and Dolphin, but the real winner will become evident when the software arrives. **Next**Gen



■ **...although they are made up of polygons. Computer Artworks says that its in-game creatures boast more triangles than *Evolva*'s pre-rendered FMV sequences**



■ **Graph showing the advantages of a GeForce processor, and an image from the chip's physics and rendering demo**

■ BITS FROM THE EDGE

News Bytes

Sega pulled off the biggest launch in the history of videogames, with Dreamcast selling nearly 400,000 units in five days. To celebrate the launch, the company also threw one of the industry's largest-ever parties, in a swank San Francisco club, with representatives from every major third-party publisher and developer present. More than one Sega employee was witnessed during the festivities raising a glass and toasting ousted COO Bernie Stolar. "This was his launch," they would say; one or two were seen crying. **Crying was the last thing on Stolar's mind.** Making an appearance at ECTS a week earlier, Stolar was the belle of the ball. With an entourage of adoring fans, Bernie shook hands with anyone and everyone at Europe's ultimate game-industry event. On the subject of his departure from Sega, though, the former COO remained silent. **GT Interactive, which has won some landmark copyright suits** against level-pack makers, is now on the other side of the witness stand. StarPlay (we've never heard of them either) is suing the company for alleged piracy of *Alley 19 Bowling*. The company claims GT took a copy of StarPlay's bowling epic and distributed it unlawfully throughout Europe. StarPlay believes the case is worth $110,000 in direct damages and $5,000,000 in punitive. GT is prepared to settle for a few copies of *Driver*. The courts will decide. **ArtX, maker of the graphics chip in Nintendo's Dolphin,** was scheduled to reveal that chip to the propellerheads of the world at the Microprocessor Forum engineering conference this fall. Now the firm has backed out of the conference, no doubt because Nintendo wouldn't sign its permission slip. **Graphics-card**

■ RIME OF THE CUTTING-EDGE MARINER

X-Box Update

More details emerge on Microsoft's foray into the console world, including a new code name

After breaking the story last issue, **Next Generation** has learned more about Microsoft's X-Box "console PC" initiative. The system will be a non-upgradable, closed box built using top-of-the-line PC components, including a 4 GB hard drive. Although X-Box is the name of the device, the development program has the slicker code name "Mariner." Much like Dreamcast, output is possible either via a TV or a VGA monitor. This has led some to call it a "junior PC," but the closed nature of the box and planned 100% plug-and-play ease-of-use means that in practice it should function more like a console than a PC.

Is it a "junior PC"? Its closed nature and ease of use make it seem closer to a console

While we reported last month that the device would be powered by an Intel processor, sources at Advanced Micro Devices have since insisted that X-Box will be powered by an AMD Athlon processor. Also, while sources initially told us that X-Box would use a modified version of Windows CE, new sources have told us that the OS will in fact be a customized version of Windows 2000, which will install each game into a special directory to avoid any conflicts.

According to high-level sources at Sega of America, Sega has known about the Mariner project for some time and looks at it as "complementary" to Dreamcast. The idea is that since porting between Dreamcast and PC is so easy (and about to get easier — the new version of the Win CE dev kit for Dreamcast, 2.0, is getting high marks from developers), having yet another PC-like platform gives developers and publishers more incentive to develop for Dreamcast.

As for Microsoft, the official line has gone from "sounds like wishful thinking" to "this is a rumor, and it is not Microsoft's policy to comment on rumors." We'll have more as it develops, including a comprehensive analysis of all four next-generation competitors — Microsoft, Sega, Sony, and Nintendo — next issue. **Next**Gen

WHAT IS X-BOX?

In case you missed last month's NG (shame on you!) here's the *Cliffs Notes* on X-Box: It's Microsoft's entry in the next-generation console wars: a non-upgradable, closed box packed with the latest PC hardware, including a DVD drive, AMD's Athlon processor, and nVidia's NV-10 graphics technology. The operating system — and overall system design — are courtesy of Microsoft, and the system is designed to be used as a game console and movie player, although Internet and productivity applications will also run, and the system can be hooked to a VGA monitor as well as a TV. The planned cost? Under $300.

■ BUILDING A GAME MACHINE

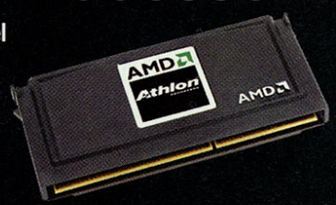
AMD's New Athlon Processor

Laying the smack down on Intel

AMD has begun shipping its newest processor, Athlon (formerly K7) out to retail. How does this news affect you personally? If you are looking to build the fastest gaming PC on the planet, read on.

Coming in at 500, 550, 600, and 650MHz flavors, the Athlon finally proves that AMD can compete with — if not beat — Intel in terms of raw processing muscle. Tested against a PIII 600MHz processor-based system, our 600MHz Athlon killed the competition in just about every test — especially when it came to games.

While Pentium IIIs only have 32KB of L1 cache, Athlon's have 128KB, and while Pentium IIIs sit on a 100MHz front side bus, Athlon rides a much swifter 200MHz pipe. AMD also has plans for doubling that speed in the not-so-distant future. A much-improved floating point math unit is responsible for a great deal of Athlon's improved gaming performance, and this time around (relative to the K6-2 and K6-3), gamers won't have to rely on 3DNOW!-supported titles to play games at faster rates than on Intel-based platforms.



■ As you can see, the Athlon looks exactly like a PII. It's electronically different, however, so you will need a motherboard that supports it

While we do recommend this technology to gamers, our recommendation does come with a caveat. Intel has just launched a massive campaign to put an end to AMD's shenanigans by dropping the price of its processors to insanely low levels. For the first time, the fastest Intel CPUs on the market are less expensive than AMD's. So while the Athlon is a bit faster than the PIII, price may be reason enough to keep you in Intel's camp. Shop wisely! **Next**Gen

— Compiled by Aaron John Loeb, executive producer, www.dailyradar.com

makers choose the most romantic names. In keeping with the macho, blood-and-guts nomenclature of PC graphics chips (what could be more hard-assed than a collection of diodes?), nVidia has announced its new super accelerator, the GeForce (G-Force — get it?). Meanwhile, 3Dfx is secretly plotting its next step under the manly-man code-name "Napalm." While it's clear that every employee of both companies was beaten regularly in high school, the trend must be put to an end. The solution? None in sight, as even usually milquetoast S3 joins the fray with its jungle cat of a chip, the Savage 2000. **While we're on the subject of names . . .** TEN has abandoned its original, pleasing acronym — Total Entertainment Network — and its *muy macho* charter of all action games, all the time, to pursue the very serious business of backgammon as Pogo.com. In the final acknowledgment that the mid-1990s feeding frenzy of venture capital pouring into online game networks was a massive waste of money, TEN put down the BFGs and picked up the B-I-N-G-Os. For those keeping score at home, that's "Graphics Cards are made by tough guys. Online Game Networks are for Granny." **At the 37th Jamma Show,** Japan's pre-eminent gathering of arcade game makers, the beat went on. With every major videogame maker unveiling games that involve singing, mixing songs, playing guitars, hitting drums, or otherwise making music, Konami found itself in quite a pickle. The maker of the original beat game, *Beatmania*, Konami has lately taken to suing anyone making derivative works. If Jamma is any indication, Konami will soon be in litigation with every man, woman, child, and robot dog on the island of Japan.

The latest news from the coin-op front

SEGA ANNOUNCES HISTORIC PLANS

In a summer meeting with US arcade industry members, Sega of Japan chairman and CEO Isao Okawa denied that Sega is ignoring the arcade market.

"I hear many claims saying that Sega is leaving the arcade business," Okawa said. Then, looking into the eyes of the arcade industry, he declared with great emphasis: "THIS...IS...NOT...SO!"

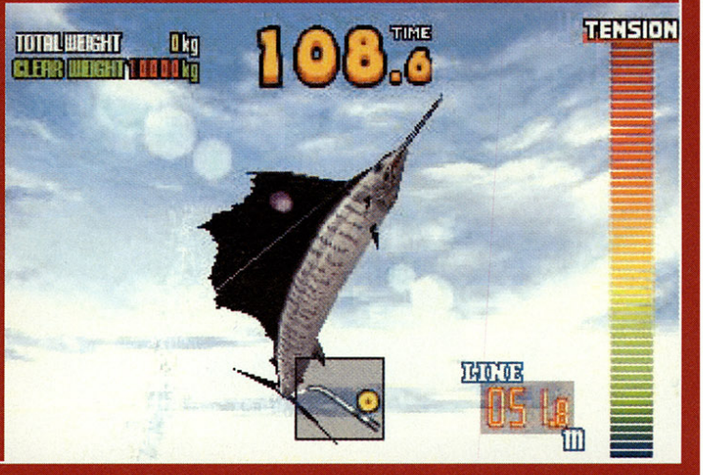
To prove Sega is as active as ever in the arcade arena, Okawa cited plans to release 30 Naomi games over the next 12 months. This would be the most ambitious arcade game release schedule for any factory in history. If achieved, it will obviously be due to the much-touted synergy between Dreamcast and its arcade sister, Naomi. The Sega arcade team plans to concentrate on sports titles in the first round, so by early next year you can look for the games currently under the working titles "Power Hoops" basketball, "Power Kick" soccer, and "Power Smash" tennis.

Okawa also sketched plans to "fuse" the arcade and console markets via Internet broadband service provided through a strategic partnership with AT&T. Okawa envisions global, net-based player networks in which Sega would unite thousands of players at a time on a single game. Mr. Okawa told arcade industry members that the AT&T alliance would enable Sega to get a jump on the rest of the Internet community in providing broadband downloading capability. (Sega later pointed out that some 27 million players are expected to participate in online gaming by 2002.) Details of how such networks would promote arcade gameplay are unclear, but some form of cross-promotional, overlapping-play tournaments seems likely. Sega R&D chiefs have speculated in recent months that game updates could also someday be downloaded to arcade units on location, using the Naomi platform.

While Sega's parent company is already traded on the Nikkei stock market in Japan, Okawa also announced the company's plans to bring U.S. subsidiaries public in the USA. Acknowledging that past management errors cost Sega its console market leadership — and hundreds of millions of dollars in the last couple of years — Okawa vowed to correct those mistakes and "establish a new Sega." His words: "We are going to be reborn as Sega.com and are planning an IPO for this new company." The date of the eventual offering has not yet been disclosed, and no one at Sega Enterprises, the US coin-op division, could confirm any more specifics.

YOUR TURN TO PLAY, HEMINGWAY

The century's brawniest writer, Ernest Hemingway, always portrayed deep sea fishing as an ultimate test of physical toughness and moral courage. Konami seems to agree; it is casting out the bait for those big blue marlin in its latest arcade simulator, *Marlin Challenge*. It's a sequel to last year's *Fisherman's Bait*, which — surprisingly, perhaps — wound up on top of the arcade charts during the summer of '98. Well, maybe not so surprising when you consider the sheer testosterone value of pitting your mind and muscle against those wily denizens of the deep. Player controls include the now-familiar rod-and-reel that lets you cast, then shut down the drag or play out the line as needed to hopefully land The Big One. In *Marlin*'s training mode, an old salt named "The Captain" shows you the ropes. Then it's off to the deep blue as you select your favorite spot. Scenic locales include coral reefs, the coastal breakwater, a sunken treasure ship, and other exotic waterways, as your fish finder radar-device helps you locate your prey. Then work on your reel techniques to catch the biggest blue marlin, swordfish, striped marlin, sailfish, tarpon, or whichever other colorful creatures you can hook. When a fish strikes, it's important to keep your eye on the tension gauge — too much tension, and your line will snap! Catch enough big ones, and you'll advance to the "Billfish Challenge," where only billfish count. Realism? It's got everything but seasickness.



NAMCO'S "TEKKEN TAG" TOURNEYS

Namco America launched regional tournaments on its popular *Tekken Tag Tournament* game in September. Hundreds of local tournaments across the US offered players the chance to compete for prizes (starting with T-shirts and posters). Regional tournaments began on Oct. 2, 1999, taking place at GameWorks (Schaumburg, IL); The Garage (Bellevue, WA); Southern Hills Golfland (Staton, CA); XS New York (New York, NY). The following week, tournaments were held at: Einstein's (Austin, TX); Mindboggle Video Arcade (Richmond, VA); RagTime Church Street Station (Orlando, FL); and Tilt (Aurora, CO). The top four regional winners are then set to "battle it out" at the National Tournament on November 6 at Namco Wonder Park in Milpitas, Calif. The next day, the World Tournament matches the best in the US against the best from Asia. For more information, check out www.tekkentagtournament.com.

■ TOM RUSSO'S

In the Studio

Development news as it develops

WITCH HUNT

Been scared by the Blair Witch? Well, you might not have to leave your living room to next enter the woods of Burkittsville. The word is out in the channel that the interactive rights for *The Blair Witch Project* are on the auction block. By the time you read this, some publisher is probably already negotiating a development deal.

WAIT, IT GETS EVEN MORE EVIL

While Capcom may seem to have a stranglehold on survival-horror games with the *Resident Evil* series and *Dino Crisis*, not everything undead lurks in the mind of Shinji Mikami. **Next Generation** has learned that THQ has a developer hard at work on a PlayStation version of the 1982 tongue-in-cheek horror flick, *The Evil Dead*, by writer/director Sam Raimi. No word on who's developing or when it's due out for release.

PLAYSTATION 2 ROADKILL

In the wake of a hundred-and-one PlayStation 2 announcements coming out of Japan, an interesting US title has worked its way to daylight. Electronic Arts has a tentatively-titled "Road Rash 4" for PlayStation 2 being internally developed at its Redwood Shores headquarters. No word on if it will be a US launch title, but it's likely.

FACTOR 5 GOES DOLPHIN HUNTING

While it'd take vice clamps, a power saw, and the backroom of a Las Vegas casino to get Nintendo to admit it, a **Next Generation** source has revealed that Factor 5's unofficial *Turrican* sequel, tentatively *Thornado*, has been signed for Project Dolphin. Well, now we know there'll be another game besides *Mario*.

HAWK TALK

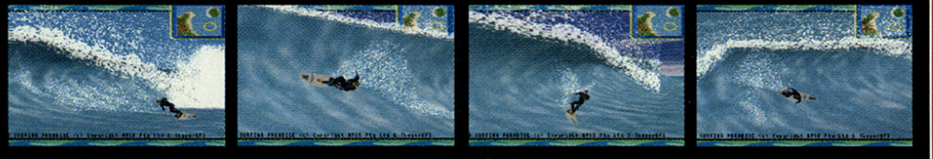
No surprise that everyone's raving about how great *Tony Hawk's Pro Skateboarding* is for PlayStation. So how about a sequel? *Tony Hawk's Skateboarding 2* is already in the works at Neversoft for PlayStation and Nintendo 64. Neversoft has also just showed up on the official PlayStation 2 developers list, so there's chance Tony will show up there as well.

STILL — MORE EVIL

Capcom has indicated that it may have even more survival-horror projects hidden behind the doors of its Osaka offices. Besides the ninja-based *Onimusha* on PlayStation 2, there is also a *House of the Dead*-type gun game based on the *Resident Evil* license lurking in the wings. We're thrilled, or is it chilled?

SURF'S UP ON PLAYSTATION

Queensland, Australia-based developer Krome Studios has developed a fantastic wave propagation engine for, of all things, PlayStation. So you better believe the surf will be up when the developer brings its surfing title to the US. At press time, several publishers were bidding on the game.



ANGELS OUT OF LEFT FIELD

Up-and-comer Angel Studios, developer of Nintendo's *Ken Griffey Slugfest*, has got some big things in the works, according to Angel's marketing director, Kevin Williams. It's no secret Angel is developing middleware for Sony's PlayStation 2, and Williams also confirms the company is working on a top-secret Nintendo 64 project. If he ever lets us knows what it is, we'll be sure to pass it along.

■ LONDON CALLING

ECTS Wrap-up

Beers at the booths, but not much else as Europe gathers for E3's Annual Postscript

You could count the new games unveiled at ECTS on the fingers of a sloth. Okay, so the *WarCraft 3* announcement counts as a big news event, but when you add our rampaging orc friends to the dismally thin sliver of new games shown at the European gaming community's biggest live event, it doesn't exactly amount to a thick slice of excitement pie.

The trouble with ECTS is that it just ain't E3. Nor is it the Tokyo Game Show. This is just a place where European suits gather to see the stuff they would have seen in Los Angeles if they hadn't been too cheap to buy the trans-Atlantic fare. Actually, that's not quite true; if they'd gone to E3, they'd have seen a whole lot more.

ECTS, while undoubtedly busy and successful and useful, doesn't have quite the same gotta-be-there cachet of E3. Here's an example. The biggest story of September 1999 was the appearance of a brand-new console from Sega. The British media covering ECTS figured this out, giving Dreamcast ample coverage. Only trouble was, Sega didn't exhibit. The machines and games on show were all courtesy of third-party exhibitors and jobbing distributors. Other notable absentees included Electronic Arts, GT Interactive, and Activision.

Nintendo's ECTS was a big friendly attempt to be nice to a continent it had previously regarded with all the warmth of Julius Caesar glaring balefully at woad-wearing savages from his trireme. The company took a large stand in the center of Olympia, offering plenty of welcome entrance points. Howard Lincoln and Shigeru Miyamoto were available for press interviews, and the right noises were being made about commitment to Europe. The result was a booth was packed with Euro-gamers eager to try *Donkey Kong*, *Perfect Dark*, and *Jet Force Gemini*, all of which were developed not 50 miles from London.

By contrast, Sony takes a more aloof approach to the show. Visitors can only get to see the latest PlayStation creations via one portal, leading to what can best be described as a show removed from a show. This is the kind of behavior you would expect from an exceptional beauty who inflames suitors by being ever more distant. However, as PlayStation 2 becomes an issue, expect Sony to rediscover its role as part of the industry, as opposed to

Continued on page 25

Continued from page 22

above the industry.

WarCraft 3 was the official Big Deal of the Show. Gathered hacks were suitably impressed by 3D visuals, a new roleplay strategy focus, and that famous Blizzard unit design. Other new games included two from Acclaim; *Furballs* is a wacky, colorful, zany (etc.) character-based 3D action adventure of the *Rayman* school, while *Project Vanishing Point* is a PlayStation racing game. Apart from a few European notables such as Stromlo's first-person shooter *Splinter* and Blue Byte's fourth iteration of *The Settlers* and *Battle Isle* series, new games were hard to find.

Still, it's easy for those of us who get to go to E3 to dismiss this event. Fact is, the locals love it. Curiously, some of these Europeans seem to be under the impression that California is not the center of the universe and do not want to travel 6,000 miles every year to play a few games. This, the tenth year of ECTS, was the biggest yet, with over 20,000 attendees and visitors from 67 different countries. It ain't the best show in the world, but it's far and away the best in Europe. — *Colin Campbell*

It's easy for those of us who go to E3 to dismiss the event, but fact is, the locals love it

■ RETRO HEAVEN

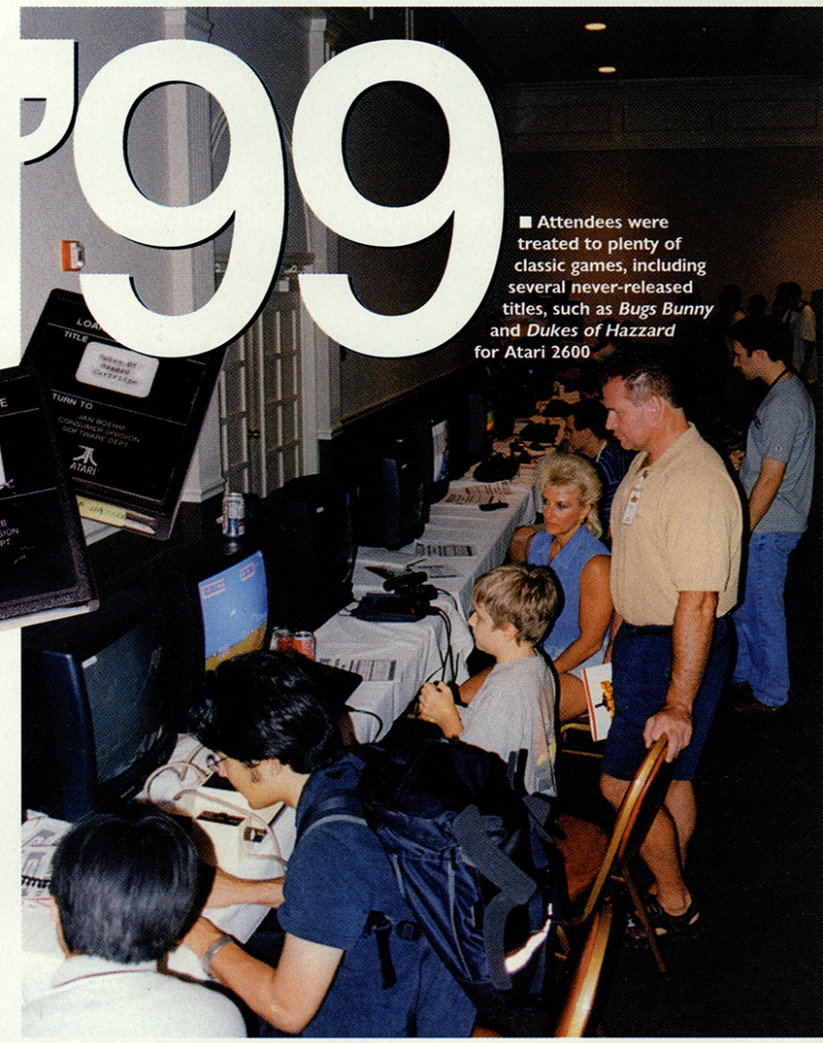
Classic Gaming Expo '99

A class reunion for the old school

To collect this issue's latest game-industry news, we have trekked from Nintendo's Spaceworld show in Japan all the way to ECTS, London's annual video-game tradeshow. But not every tradeshow exists to sell new consoles and games. If the first game you ever pre-ordered was *Pac-Man* for Atari 2600, then you certainly would have enjoyed the casual pace of the Classic Gaming Expo, held the weekend of August 14 at the Plaza Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

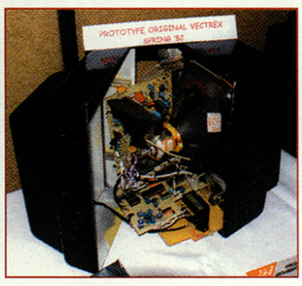
No gigantic expo hall stuffed with million-dollar booths, CGE was (and continues to be) a grass-roots effort, put together by a few individuals whose love of games hearkens back to a time when *Donkey Kong* was actually the bad guy. Born out of last year's World of Atari show, admission for CGE was $35 for two days, and the show, while never really crowded, reached approximately 650 attendees. Corporate sponsorship of CGE was minimal, but as the CGE program explains, the show has been a labor of love by classic gamers for classic gamers. This was obvious to anyone who saw the extremely impressive museum collection, met with many prominent guests (including Activison founders Steve Cartwright and David Crane) and perused the classic games and memorabilia available to play and purchase.

The show floor, though small, was lined with classic coin-op titles, not booth babes and people wearing costumes of videogame characters. Several hardcore classic gamers were on hand to break long-standing high-score records. The contests were sponsored by *Twin Galaxies Official Video Game and Pinball Book of World Records*, which had set up $1,000 bounties on many world records. One of those up to the challenge was 30-year-old Dwayne Richard of Grand Prairie, Alberta, Canada, who drove his *Tutankham* machine across the north country and into Nevada to challenge the 17-year-old record of 244,920 points. Richard beat the record, scoring 249,980. US *Tetris* champion Steve Krogman successfully defended his title against UK champ James Clewett, who flew to the US to challenge Krogman. (Clewett, a former member of Britain's national karate team, honed his *Tetris* skills after he was immobilized for several months due to a knee injury he sustained in competition.)



■ Attendees were treated to plenty of classic games, including several never-released titles, such as *Bugs Bunny* and *Dukes of Hazzard* for Atari 2600

■ **Ralph Baer's "Brown Box," the prototype of the original Vectrex, and the never-released Atari Game Brain were just a few of the impressive museum pieces. Atari's Game Brain (above) was a cartridge-based system that pre-dated Atari 2600, and primarily played *Pong*-style games**



While there was plenty of side action going on with the competitions, the highlight of the show was keynote speaker Ralph Baer, who is technically the father of the home videogame. It was Baer, way back in 1968, who developed the prototype "Brown Box," a console with *Pong* and a lightgun, which could be attached to the TV. (Atari's first *Pong* game machines were stand-alone coin-op machines.) Baer's technology was licensed to Magnavox, which became the basis of the design for the first Odyssey.

Miraculously, Baer's priceless "Brown Box" (remember: this thing effectively launched a $7 billion industry) still works 31 years later. Baer had the box on hand and gave the audience practically the same demonstration he gave to Magnavox three decades ago. (For more information on the remarkable Ralph Baer, visit his website at www.ralphbaer.com.)

According to organizers John Hardie, Keita Ida, and Sean Kelly, the show has been a burden to pull off, but a success nonetheless. As someone who spends too much time dealing with the business of games, this reporter found the easygoing gamer camaraderie among the classic crowd inspiring, although admittedly a bit nostalgic. If you missed it this year, don't worry, the organizers are already planning CGE 2000. More information will be available soon at www.cgexpo.com. **NextGen**

Q&A

In a world of tough questions, you need a source for equally tough answers — welcome to Q&A

Welcome to our latest section, Q&A. You've got questions, we've got answers. To any computer and videogame question — the harder the better. The processor for the Intellivision? Sure (General Instruments CP1610). The nationality of the programmer for the original *Final Fantasy*? No problem (Iranian). The first pirated piece of consumer software? Done (Microsoft BASIC for the Altair). With a combined total of more than 100 years of gameplaying experience among the staff, we've amassed a store of game knowledge second to none, and if we don't know the answers, we know where to get them. So if you've got game questions, we've got answers. For this first installment, we've taken our questions from recent submissions to **Next Generation** Online.

■ *Why did Sony use Linux as the OS for PlayStation 2?*
PlayStation 2 itself doesn't actually use Linux, but the PlayStation 2 development system does. According to Ken Kutaragi, SCEI boss and PlayStation creator, Linux was chosen for its stability and ease of modification.

■ *Is it true that* Omikron *started as a text-based adventure?*
True. In fact, many games (especially adventure games) start as text adventures so that designers can test gameplay while art assets are being put together.

■ *What's the average salary for a game programmer?*
They usually start around $45,000 and go up from there.

■ *Is there ever going to be a* Monkey Island 4*?*
Maybe. *Monkey Island 3* sold poorly, but we'd still bet that LucasArts returns to the franchise — just a hunch and a rumor for now, but some day, maybe.

■ *Tommy Tallarico or the Fat Man?*
Tough to call. The Fat Man (who isn't fat at all) definitely has the reach and height advantage, but we wouldn't put it past Tallarico to fight dirty, and he gets some hometown points from us because he's from Massachusetts. Still, the bottom line is this: one-on-one, fair fight, we give it to the Fat Man, but if the entourages get involved, the edge goes to Tallarico.

Wait — you didn't mean music-wise, did you?

■ *I just moved my 2600 from the basement to the living room, but it doesn't work on my big-screen TV. What's the deal?*
The problem is that digital tuners can't pick up the 2600's video signal. Not surprisingly, Atari engineers used a hack to get RF output, and it simply won't work with the new digital tuners, which are optimized for picking up cable signals. Even with an RF adapter, the best you'll get is a fuzzy mess. Still, there are a couple of options. You can run the 2600 through an old, analog VCR and use that as the tuner, then run the video out from the VCR into your current setup, but the best option (if you can solder) is to modify the signal of your 2600 so that it outputs a standard composite signal. There are instructions for this online. The one we used is found at http://www.hwcn.org/~ad329/2600vidm.html.

■ *Who designs the characters for Capcom? Is it one guy or what?*
Although Yoshiki Okamoto oversees all development as director of R&D, there's no single character-design guru, and the different teams create their own characters. For example, Keiji Inafune created Mega Man, while Producer Shinji Mikami came up with the characters from *Resident Evil* and *Dino Crisis*.

■ *Why do Sony, Sega, and Nintendo do territorial lockouts?*
Licensing. Publishers often sell the distribution rights to different companies in different countries, so they want to minimize the number of copies of a game that get sold in a territory it isn't licensed for (yet), to keep up the value of the license. If Activision buys the rights to *Tenchu* for the US, the company wouldn't be very happy if the Japanese *Tenchu* ran fine on US systems, especially if Activision planned to release the game at a later date, because import sales would cut into Activision's. In fact, though, current territorial lockouts are so easy to defeat it's led to many games being given worldwide, simultaneous releases.

■ *What was the first company to deviate from the 9-pin controller configuration used on the 2600?*
Well, 2600 contemporaries like Odyssey and Fairchild didn't use it, nor did Intellivision, but the first system not to use the 9-pin plug *after* Atari was NES — smart, since Sega lost a patent suit to Atari over the joysticks. And FYI, you can use a Genesis controller on a 2600 (use button B).

■ SOUL CALIBUR

All real, all the time

***Soul Calibur* looks awesome on Dreamcast, but settle a bet: is the opening movie pre-rendered? I say it is, my friend says it isn't.**

You lose. It's rendered on the fly.

■ **Rendered on the fly, the intro movie for *Soul Calibur* surpasses pre-rendered efforts on previous systems**

The bottom line is this: one-on-one, fair fight, we give it to the Fat Man, but if the entourages get involved, the edge goes to Tallarico

Send questions to
hardcore@next-generation.com,
and be sure to check out our daily Q&A on Imagine Media's Daily Radar game site at
http://www.dailyradar.com.

At an eagerly attended press conference in Tokyo, Sony reveals the name, price, games, and strategy for its next-generation machine

■ Call us naïve, but for some reason, we always hoped Sony would make "Next Generation PlayStation" the permanent name of the system

Hardware specs

PlayStation2 at a glance

Release date	3/4/00 (Japan)
Launch price	¥39800 ($390)
Dimensions	301mm (W) x 178mm (D) x 78mm (H); 2.1Kg
CPU	128-bit "Emotion Engine" @ 294.912 MHz
Memory	32 MB direct DRAM
GPU	"Graphics Synthesizer" @ 147.456 MHz
VRAM	4MB embedded on chip
Sound	SPU2, 48 hardware channels, 2MB audio RAM
Disc Drive	CD-ROM (24x), DVD-ROM (4x)
I/O	PlayStation CPU+ @ 33.86 or 36.86 MHz (selectable), 2MB I/O RAM
Interfaces	Controller port (x2), memory card slot (x2), AV multi-out, optical digital out, USB port (x2), i.Link (IEEE1394), PCMCIA slot (type III)

PlayStation2 ARRIVES

After months of speculation, the last of Sony's secrets about PlayStation2 were revealed to the world on September 13. Some were expected (the name, PlayStation2), some were surprising (the low launch price), and some were downright startling (the DualShock2 announcement).

While the mind-blowing specs of Sony's next-generation machine were released last March (see sidebar, above, if you need a refresher), many important features were revealed only just prior to Tokyo Game Show. The most immediate revelation was the name of the name: the pragmatic PlayStation2. A new "PS2" logo adorns the box, and creator Ken Kutaragi says he expects PS2 to become the informal term for the system.

The box itself is controversial: first impressions have been either love or hate, with very little middle ground. Designed by Sony hardware guru Mr. Goto, who also created the original PlayStation box as well as the VAIO PC, it is matte black with a post-industrial, asymmetrical design. Equipped with a sliding CD tray, it can be used horizontally, or, using an optional stand, in a tower configuration. According to Goto, the design is intended to mirror the universe: the black box represents space, while the blue and purple base is a metaphor for the earth. Overall, it's slightly smaller than PS1. The standard controller will be Space Black — picture black with a bit of subtle glitter thrown in and you've got the idea. As for us, having seen it up close — the pictures Sony has provided simply do not do the unit justice — we love it. The design is consciously component-like: PS2 looks more like a VCR than it does a traditional game machine, but, especially in the tower configuration, it possesses a grace that is totally unique.

Given the planned power of PS2, many experts expected Sony to have trouble producing the chips that power the system both in quantity and at a reasonable price. While the company is almost certainly taking a loss on each unit, it has still managed to keep the launch price to ¥39800, the same launch price as PlayStation. As for quantities, the company promises that 1,000,000 machines will be available for the Japanese launch on March 4, 2000. (Those who

You could hear the gasps of amazement when Sony unveiled its futuristic new powerhouse for the first time... and then we saw the games

THE PS2 JAPANESE LAUNCH TITLES

expected a more auspicious number, like 3/21 or 12/3, take heart — since it is the twelfth year of the current Japanese Emperor's rule, the launch date in the Japanese calendar is 12-3-4.)

In the box at launch will be two new accessories to go along with the new hardware: an 8MB memory card and the DualShock2 Controller. The memory card has 64 times the capacity of the PS1 card and transfers data at 256 times the current rate. Although Sony has already announced a "multiple gig" hard drive for the unit sometime in 2001, the new memory card (capable of holding 1/4 of the data on the *Zelda 64* cart) should be more than enough for most games.

More exciting is DualShock2, which features analog, pressure-sensitive buttons (except for start and select). Although button-presses on the pad feel exactly like a traditional DualShock, patented sensors in the pad provide 256 levels of velocity data with each press. The implications for gaming are immense: imagine a fighting game where different moves happen depending on how hard you hit the buttons, and you can start to understand just what types of new gameplay the controller will enable.

Discs for PS2 will be either blue or silver — blue for CD-ROMs and silver for DVD-ROMS. As expected, DVD movies are playable on the system, as are original PlayStation black discs. Although PS1 games won't look any better on PS2, Sony has just released development libraries that will enable forthcoming PS1 games to take advantage of the 24x CD drive's faster load times (the PS1 has only a 2x drive). Sony has also made it clear that all licensed PS1 peripherals should work perfectly on the new systems, from multitaps to memory cards.

Also unveiled at the event was PS Tool, the awkwardly named PS2 development hardware. Looking like a mothership version of the PS hardware, the ¥2,000,000 ($20,000) Tool is a dual-featured system: it can work in a traditional programming/debugging mode, but also as a Linux-powered workstation that uses the PS2 hardware itself (albeit with more RAM) to create graphics.

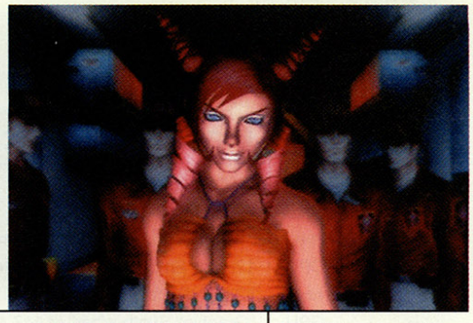
The Online Game

Hardware was only part of Sony's announcement. The company also announced its Internet and product development and marketing strategies, which make it clear that Sony is looking at PS2 as far more than just a videogame system.

Although no modem will ship with the unit, Sony plans to ship a combined Ethernet and hard-drive expansion pack in 2001 that will enable PS2 to use a cable modem to download broadband content, such as movies on demand, but beginning with "PlayStation and PlayStation2 software libraries." The company is also planning to launch an "e-distribution" server for electronic commerce, which will use Sony's new Magic Gate encryption scheme.

With only a tiny sliver of the market currently using cable modems, wouldn't gamers prefer a regular modem or DSL connection? Not according to Sony. "The thing you have to understand is that right now there is no killer app for cable modems," says Phil Harrison, vice president of third-party relations and R&D for SCEA. "What we're creating is something that can actually drive that market forward." Maybe, but we remain skeptical: Sony says cable modems will have a 10% penetration in US homes, thanks to PS2, but considering how much cable crawls today when just a few people on the same line have cable modems online, DSL seems like a smarter bet. "Cable is all we've announced so far," counters Harrison. "You'll see more announcements in the future, and don't forget, you don't necessarily need a wired connection to do this," he concludes tantalizingly. Wireless plans for PS2? Harrison won't give details, but for those already frustrated with cable, it's an encouraging sign.

What about going online right away? There may be a market there, says Harrison, but Sony isn't interested: "Our long-term strategy . . . is broadband.



THE BOUNCER

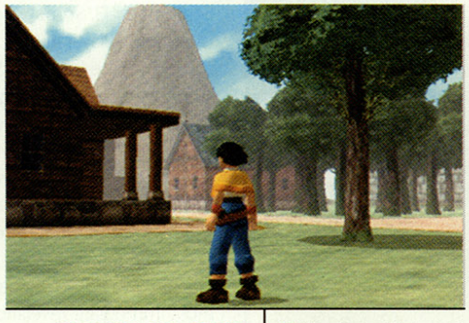
Publisher: Square
Developer: Square

This free-roaming fighter wasn't playable, but showed off amazing lighting effects and realtime 3D graphics. The framerate was a rock-solid 60fps as well

GRAN TURISMO 2000

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: SCEI

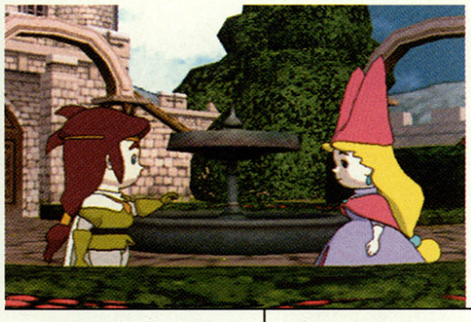
The PS2 update to the best-selling franchise, the hallmark of the demo version we played was sim-like control and lots of highlighting on the cars



DARK CLOUD

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: SCEI

Create and interact with a stunning digital world in this god-game-meets-RPG. A surprise title, this really shows off PlayStation2's capabilities



POPOLOCROIS STORY III

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: SCEI

What can we say: this is the game you know (or at least hope) won't make it to America — its a hyper-cute anime title that looks like it could have been done on Super NES

TEKKEN TAG TOURNEMENT

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco

An amazing update to the arcade game, this will be PS2's *Soul Calibur*: it's beautiful and it already plays fantastically

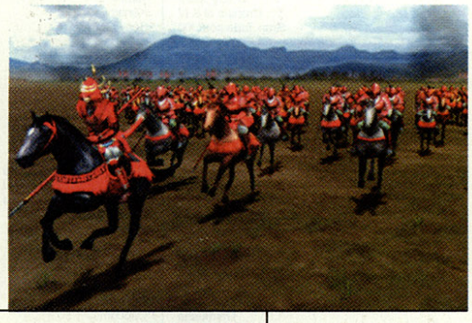
ETERNAL RING

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: From Soft

A dungeon-crawler a la *Kings Field*, the demo version featured corridors and lighting effects, but no enemies, yet

It is very ambitious and it's going to take a lot of our focus going forward. We're basically leap-frogging today's Internet: when people talk about the Internet today, they mean HTML, narrowcasting, and that's basically of no interest to us. In the short term it would be very easy to plug in a modem to PS2's PCMCIA or USB interface that delivers today's Internet experience, and we'd be happy for a third party to address that opportunity." Is Sony missing out by not having a standard browser? "Speaking personally," Harrison says, "I think looking at HTML on my TV is of no interest to me whatsoever. Why should we focus time, money, and attention [on HTML] and get distracted from the bigger goal. I'm sure there are commercial opportunities we're ignoring and missing out on, but so be it, because the end game is megabytes of data per second through broadband capabilities.

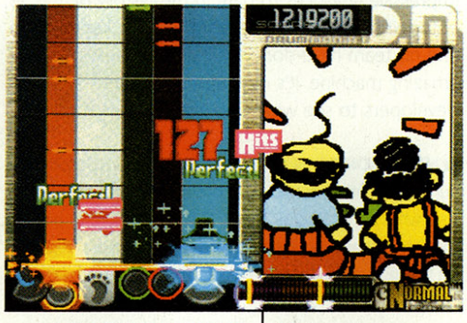
With PS2's varied capabilities, will gamers be left out in the cold in the battle to control the living room? Not at all, say Sony execs



KESSEN

■ **This feudal strategy title puts you in the role of the general, but lets you see cavalry charges with hundreds of horsemen acted out in realtime**

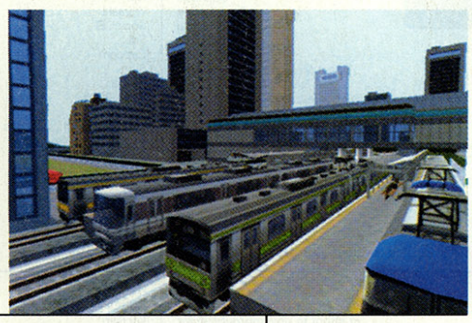
Publisher: KOEI
Developer: KOEI



DRUM MANIA

■ **Konami's latest take on music games features, you guessed it, drums and drum-and-bass action**

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami



A-TRAIN 6

■ **Art Dink's trademark train sim comes to another system. It features bird's-eye and engineer views and surprisingly detailed cities**

Publisher: Art Dink
Developer: Art Dink

UNISON

■ **Not playable at the show, this looks to be Tecmo's entry into the rhythm-action genre, featuring a Spice Girls-style lineup**

Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: Tecmo

DEN-SEN

■ **Sliding around powerlines sound fun? You'll love this effort by Sony to expand the world of unique game concepts**

Publisher: SCEI
Developer: SCEI

NEW RIDGE RACER

■ **The latest in Namco's franchise series, *NRR* wasn't playable, but it looks amazing — much better than *GT2000* at this stage**

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco

STREET FIGHTER EX3

■ **Super fast gameplay is this Capcom fighter's trademark, along with excellent tag-team options. Add amazing lighting effects and it's a Capcom fan's delight**

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom

The Back Door

Sony clearly views PS2 as a back door (or perhaps even a front door) toward an ultimate goal of being the set-top box provider. It plays movies, it plays games, and it will surf the Internet and provide broadband content on demand. Sounds great, but will gamers be left out in the cold in the battle to control the living room? Will Sony's quest to be the AT&T of mass-market entertainment in the next century mean that the company will soon be eschewing *Crash 6* in favor of *Checkers 2*?

Not at all, says Harrision. "Hardcore gamers — the people who read **Next Gen** — are the people who've given us this chance to move into new areas, so we are certainly not going to leave them behind. We want to give them new creative challenges and opportunities. That's what we're about, building technology that brings wonder into people's lives."

In fact, he says, the broadband and set-top box plans aren't the end in itself, but just part of Sony's and Ken Kutaragi's larger plan to create a new kind of interactive entertainment: computer entertainment. "Ken's very altruistic about this," says Harrison. "He wants to entertain the masses. Videogames are what brought us here, and videogames are going to continue to be the central part of our strategy. Having said that, we want to start to change the definition of 'what is a videogame.' Now, obviously driving, fighting, action, shooting — all those traditional genres are going to be as significant as ever, and there are going to be amazing advances in those genres on PlayStation2, but we also see a lot of opportunities for new creators and new product coming into existence because of PS2 technology."

The Games

Don't expect videogames to morph into computer entertainment overnight, however: there's still plenty of room for innovation inside traditional genres, as the first titles revealed for the system show. Although all thirteen titles announced for the Japanese launch (see details at left) look great, only *The Bouncer* (Square's free-roaming brawler) and *Dark Cloud* (SCEI's world-building RPG) stand out as real attempts to use the power of PlayStation2 to create a new kind of game. Harrison thinks it's unfair, though, to expect all game designers to produce genre-smashers with their first games: "For the time being, there's a commercial reality that is predominant right now perhaps over the creative reality, and that commercial reality is 'get the game done for launch.'" Even so, outside of a few exceptions (*Ridge Racer*, *Street Fighter*), the non-launch games shown at Tokyo Game Show seemed

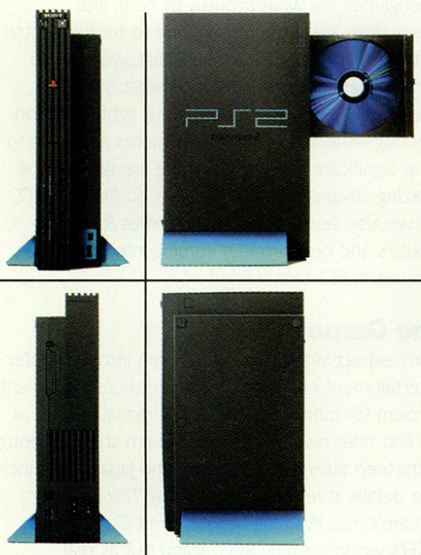
The PS2's design mirrors the universe: the black box represents space, while the blue and purple base is a metaphor for the Earth

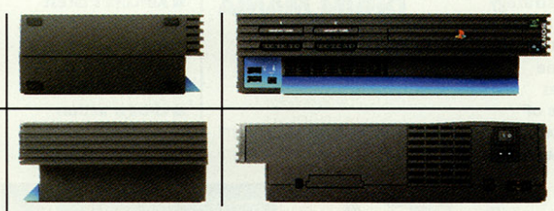
a bit weak, didn't they? "We're six months away from the launch, and many of the games shown are only a few weeks into development, so don't be too quick to judge," he says.

Overall though, the planned software library — as well as the lineup of third parties — is the strongest Japanese software lineup **Next Generation** has seen, and just as PlayStation enabled the creation of totally new genres (and cross-genre games), it seems inevitable that PlayStation2 will do the same, especially with the expandable hardware features like i-Link.

Sony has never lacked vision. When Sega and Nintendo had cart-based machines in the 16-bit days, Ken Kutaragi developed a CD-ROM based machine — the ill-fated PlayStation SNES add-on. While Sega focused on sprites for its planned 32-bit machine, Ken Kutargi developed PSX, the first game machine that could really do 3D right. And now, with PlayStation2, Ken Kutaragi's team has revealed its most visionary and ambitious project to date, a product that may well mark one of the most impressive advances to date in the history of entertainment, interactive or otherwise. Kutaragi-san and his team have done their job and delivered an amazing machine. It's now up to software developers to see what they can make of it.

■ **NEXT MONTH:** Will Sony's strategy work? Can Sega survive? Does Nintendo want out of the hardware race? And what about Microsoft and X-Box? Be sure to pick up the December **Next Generation** for an in-depth report on the state of the console wars as we move into 2000.





■ **Despite what this photos imply, the PlayStation logo on the drive door can be rotated so it always faces up**

Planned Japanese releases:

Game	Developer
1 On 1 Government	Jorudan
3D Golf	T&E Soft
3D Real Drive	VR-1 Japan
500 GP	Namco
A-Train 6	Artdink
AI Igo 2001	i4 Corp.
AI Mahjong 2001	i4 Corp.
AI Shogi 2001	i4 Corp.
American Arcade	Astroll
Armored Core 2	From Software
Baki the Grappler	Tomy
Bakuryu 2	Fujimic
Battle On The Ghat	Ecseco
BBD 2000	Enix
Billiards Master 2	Ask
Bloody Roar 3	Hudson Soft
Boku To Maoh ("The Devil and I")	Sony CEI
Bomberman 2001	Hudson Soft
Bust-A-Move 3	Enix
Choro Q HG	Takra
Dark Cloud	Sony CEI
Den-Sen	Sony CEI
Drum Mania	Konami
Eternal Ring	From Software
Exotica	Enix
F-1	Video System
Fantavision	Sony CEI
Fighting Illusion K-1 Grand Prix	Xing
Fighting QTs	Enix
Flower Sun and Rain	ASCII
Fly High	Gust
FX Pilot	Locus
Go By Train!	Taito
Gradius III & IV	Konami
Gran Turismo 2000	Sony CEI
Ide Yohsuke's Family Golf 2	Seta
I.Q. Remix	Sony CEI
Jade Cocoon 2	Genki
Jikkyou Powerful Pro Baseball	Konami
Jikkyou World Soccer 2000	Konami
Kessen	Koei
Lakemasters EX	Dazz
L'Arc-en-Ciel	Sony Music
Let's Become a Pilot 2	Victor Interactive
Magical Sports Catch Bass Club	Magical Company Limited
Magical Sports Koshien 2000	Magical Company Limited
Magical Sports ProGolfer	Magical Company Limited
Mahjong Taikai III	Koei
Mahjong Yarouze 2	Konami
Mobile Suit Gundam	Bandai
Morita Shougi	Yuki
New Cool Boarders	UEP Systems
New Ridge Racer	Namco
Ninja Gaiden (Kunai)	Tecmo
Onimusha	Capcom
Panic Surfing	ASCII
Panzer Century G Breaker	Sunrise
Perfect Golf 3	Seta
Popolocrois III	Sony CEI
Pro Mahjong Kiwame Next	Athena
Roadsters Trophy 2000	Titus
Robocop	Titus
Shanghai 5	Sun
Shin-Sangokumusou	Koei
Sidewinder Max	Asmik Ace Ent.
Sky Surfer	Idea Factory
Soldnerschild 2	Koei
Sonnette	Enix
Soul Surfing	Warashi
Splash Dive	Sony CEI
Star Ocean 3	Enix
Street Fighter EX3	Capcom
Street Mahjong Trance Majin 2	Sun
Tekken Tag Tournament	Namco
Tetsuman Menkyokaiden	Kaga Tech
The Bouncer	Square
Todai Shogi Shikenbisha Dojyo	Mainichi Communications
Tuning Car Race Game	MTO
Unison	Tecmo
Wild Wild Racing	Imagineer
World Neverland 3	Riverhill Soft
WRC	Spike
Xfire	Electronic Arts Square

Hardware specs

The five coolest things about PS2 hardware

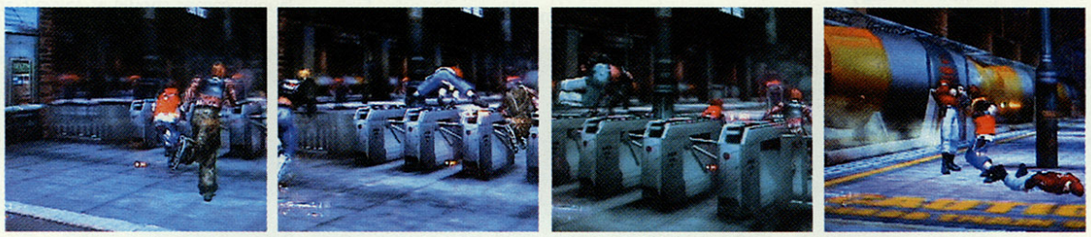
Technology	Potential Application
i-Link	Video-in to add your face or custom textures to a game
USB	Modems, multiple controllers
PCMCIA slot	Modem, game sharks
Memory Card 2	8MB save space will enable massively customizable games
DualShock2	Pressure-sensitive buttons could revolutionize gaming

North American Developer Lineup

The following publishers and developers have signed letters of intent to develop/publish for PS2 in North America.

Developer
The 3DO Company
7 Studios
Acclaim
Activision
Agetec
American Softworks (ASC)
Atlus USA
Bungie
Capcom
Cerny Games
Crave Entertainment
Digital Anvil
DreamWorks Interactive
Eidos
Electronic Arts
Enix
Fox Interactive
GT Interactive
Hasbro Interactive
Humongous Entertainment
Incredible Technologies
Infogrames Entertainment
Insomniac Games
Interplay
Konami of America
LucasArts
Midway
Mindscape
Namco Homtek
Naughty Dog, Inc
Neversoft
Oddworld Inhabitants
Red Storm Entertainment
Shiny Entertainment
Sierra
Square EA
Stormfront Studios
Sunsoft USA
Surreal Software
Take 2 Interactive
TerraGlyph
THQ
Titus Software
Ubi Soft
Universal Interactive
Working Designs

Best of Show: The Bouncer



■ **One of the best things about *The Bouncer* is how characters can interact with anything in the environment**

■ **After hurdling the turnstiles, our hero proceeds to beat up the guards and then run to hop on the train**

Alphas

The inside track on all the hot upcoming games.

Dreamcast

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Warcraft 3 98
Wu Tang: Shaolin Style 98
Evolution 98
Deadly Pursuit 98

■ ARCADE, DREAMCAST

DEAD OR ALIVE 2

■ Publisher: **Tecmo** ■ Developer: **Tecmo** ■ Release Date: **TBD** ■ Origin: **Japan**

The fighting game to die for

We don't have to tell you that *Dead or Alive 2* is one of the most spectacular-looking games we've ever seen — the screens can speak for themselves. And believe it or not, when you see the game in motion, it's even more astounding as fighters dart around each other with catlike grace and jump around environments with motions so realistic it's eerie. Due this fall in the arcades, and next year on Dreamcast and

Fighters dart around each other with catlike grace and move so realistically it's eerie

■ *DOA 1* was known for its rather risque animations, and the sequel looks to have the exact same attitude

Alphas

DEAD OR ALIVE?

In the past, it was customary to check to see if a person was dead by placing a feather or mirror in front of their mouth to check for breathing, then test a finger or ear for a pulse. In modern times, the unconfirmed departed are checked for a lack of response to pain or light, inability to breathe without a machine, lack of involuntary motions, and flat brain waves.

(perhaps) PlayStation 2, *DOA 2* looks to be the fighting game that sets the new high watermark in visual style, surpassing even *Soul Calibur* and *VF3tb*.

While the visuals are definitely top-notch, Team Ninja is also equally concerned with how the game will play. The same control scheme has been held over from the first game, which consists of three main attack buttons: free, punch, and kick. Obviously it is the free button that differentiates the fighting style of *DOA 2* from its nearest counterparts. Used properly, the free button can help your character maneuver in and out of the screen and also to easily execute reversals, which causes the flow of the battle to switch rapidly and often.

■ **Players can choose to play either the one-on-one or Team Battle modes. The Team Battle, in particular, forces players to adopt new strategies in which their two fighters work together to vanquish the opposition**

Of course, *DOA 2* will have many "sexy animations" in the same style as the first game

■ **Each fighter has their own storyline, which plays out through the single-player game. Before each fight you will be treated to some in-game cinematics detailing why the characters are confronting each other**

"*Virtua Fighter* is a defense-type game and players will alternate defense and attack position, defense, defense, and defense again," claims Tomonubu Itagaki, producer on the title. "*Dead or Alive 2* is an offense, offense, offense-type of game."

People accustomed to the way fighting games are normally played will not be accustomed to this new flow of battle, but it's easy enough to pick up. Strangely enough, once a fight gets going, it actually looks more like a martial arts battle than a traditional fighter. Adding to the feel, the characters have all been animated with a unique combination of hand animation and motion capture, which gives them a lifelike edge, but with some definite anime stylings. Of course, Itagaki admits that the game will have many "sexy animations" in the style

■ **At 60fps, the silky smooth animation of *DOA* 2 is nearly indististinguishable from the latest Hong Kong martial arts flick**

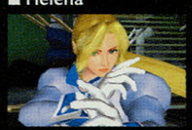
■ Ayane

■ Bass

■ Ein

■ Gen

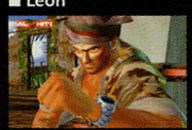
■ Helena



■ Kasumi

■ Lei-Fang

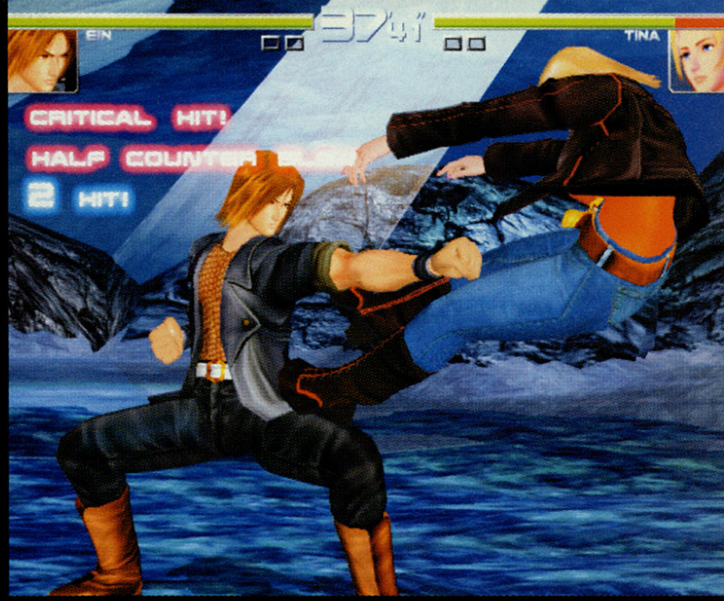
■ Leon



■ Ryu

■ Tina

■ Zack



Players can easily execute reversals which cause the flow of battle to switch rapidly and often

of the first.

"Danger Zones" still loom large in the gameplay. This device, which has characters who fall into certain areas of the ring tiles getting blown back and taking considerable damage, has been changed around a bit to make the game better. "We wanted to make the game more real," says Itagaki, "so we increased the ground effects, and we also introduced some new character gimmicks during the explosions." Even better, *DOA 2* features multi-leveled arenas so characters can be knocked off cliffs, through windows, or over a railing, only to get up on the lower level and resume fighting. There is even a new "team battle" mode where you can trade off characters in the middle of a match.

The best part about the trading of characters is that you can actually start a combo with one character and then inish with another — much like in *Tekken Tag Battle*. Of course, you can also opt to fight one-on-one if you wish.

While *DOA 2* will be hitting arcades this fall, no release date has been set for the Dreamcast (or the rumored PlayStation 2) version. While the port from Naomi to Dreamcast is a painless one, we can probably expect some enhancements (and delays) for any PlayStation 2 port (fanboys are no doubt already counting on accurate physics models for the breasts). One thing is for certain: fighting games will never be the same again. — *Blake Fischer*

■ Fighting in the citadel offers the added twist of stained glass windows that fighters can be thrown through. Don't worry, though, when you hit the ground below you'll still be able to get up and continue fighting

■ Every character has a nice assortment of painful-looking throws to make your opponent wince as you shove their face into the ground

Alphas

■ With the enemy able to engage you from the air or from under the water, you'll have to be on your toes to keep the fleet safe

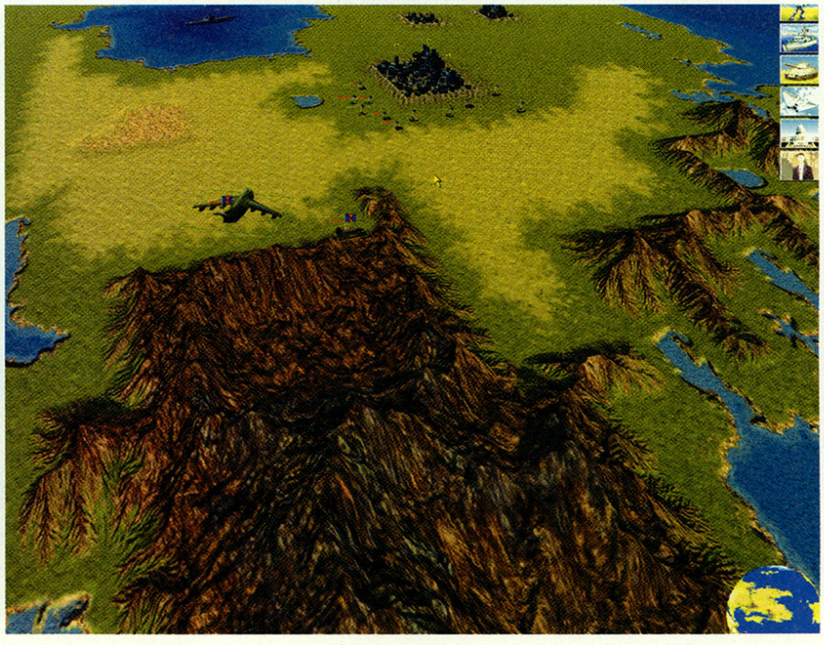
■ PC

SOVEREIGN

■ Publisher: **TBA** ■ Developer: **Verant** ■ Release Date: **Q4 2000** ■ Origin: **US**

Make your bid for planetary domination – 500 people at a time

The developers at Verant like to think big. In fact, as one of the few developers in the world devoted solely to massively multiplayer online games, they're required to. With *Sovereign*, their second effort after the highly successful *EverQuest*, the company is looking forward to bringing the realtime-strategy genre forward into a



TORTURE YOUR ENEMIES

No, this isn't the sequel to *Wild 9* — but in *Sovereign*, if you catch a spy in your city you can let him go, kill him, or subject him to torture. Torture him enough, and he will feed his original government misinformation that you supply — if he survives, that is

new age of gameplay and interaction.

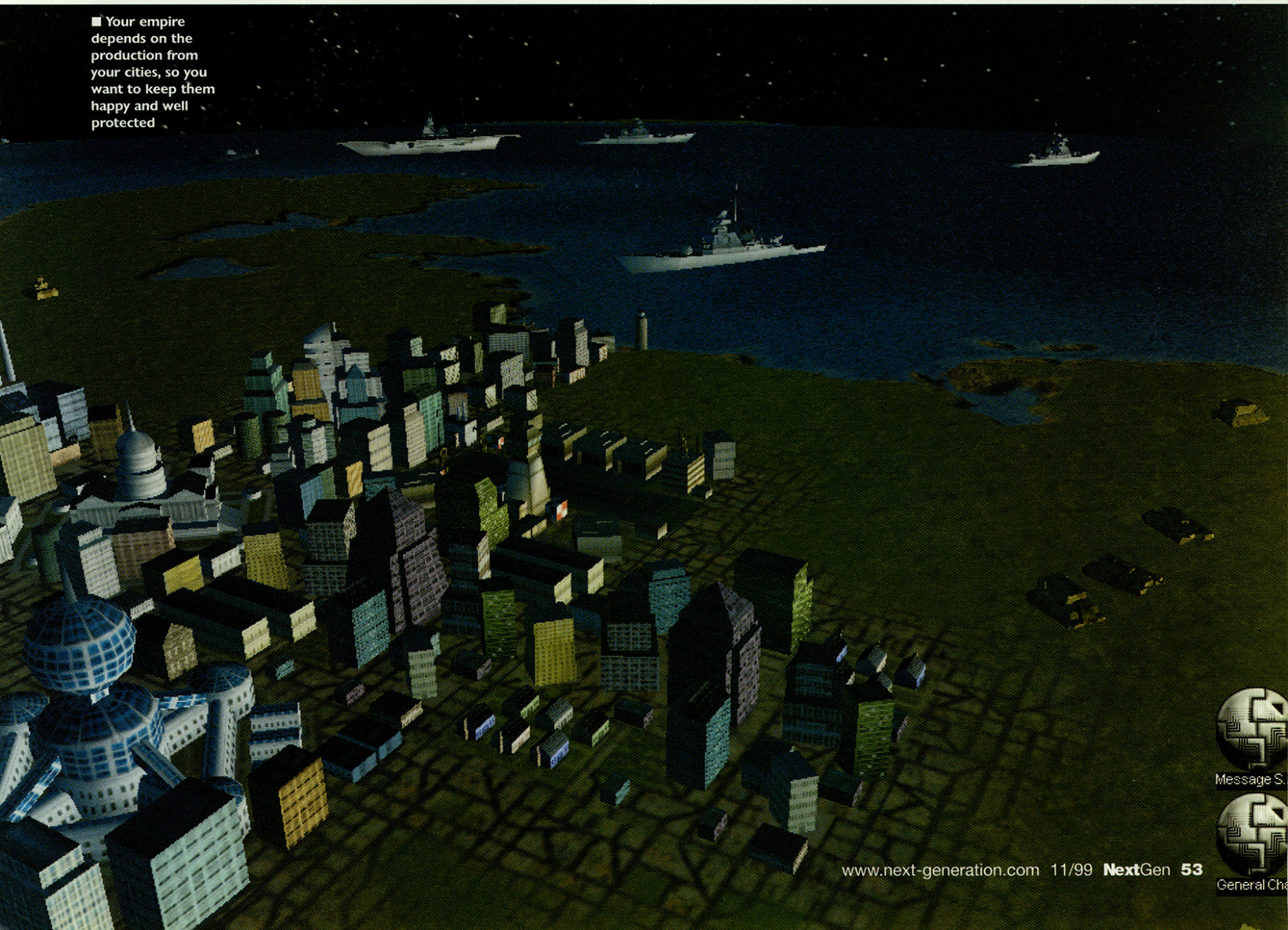
The biggest difference between *Sovereign* and its nearest competitors like *Starcraft* or *C&C* is the sheer scope of the world you play in. As many as 500 players can participate in each game, and you can play on randomly generated worlds up to 4,096 times the size of the Earth. Whichever world and game size you do choose, that world is persistent on Verant's servers for as long as the game lasts (which is supposedly around one month in realtime). Once the game starts, it will keep going with or without you until the victory conditions are met.

Which makes for a tough challenge: how will the developers level the playing field between people who play different amounts of time? One way they're doing this is by simply never letting players go. Once you leave the game and lock down your empire (which is one of many options), you are then kept in touch with what is happening in-game via email. You can actually customize your emails so that you get more frequent updates if certain conditions are met (i.e., your city is under attack). You can set the game up to page you if necessary, and there will even be an IRC-type client that you can keep running on your desktop with live chat channels with other players. This kind of thing will be very dangerous to those who have access to the Internet at work — how do you control yourself if you get an urgent call for help in the middle of the workday?

As many as 500 players can play on worlds up to 4,096 times the size of the Earth

Gameplay itself is a unique combination of *Civilization*, *Command and Conquer*, and *Diplomacy*. The basic idea of the game is to build your empire so that it can eventually conquer the world. To do this, you must use diplomatic skills to deal with other

■ Your empire depends on the production from your cities, so you want to keep them happy and well protected



Alphas

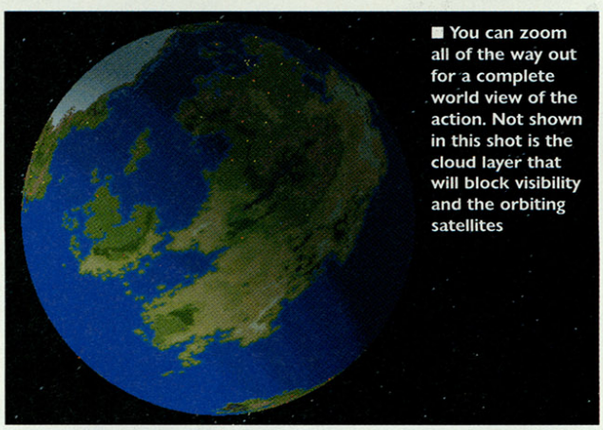
■ You can actually arrange for different parts of your armies to attack in waves for a more concerted strike. Even better, you can schedule your army to attack when you aren't even online!

players, resource-management skills to keep your empire running, tactical skills to deal with any military "opportunities," and a fair amount of guile so that you can manipulate and undermine people that get in your way. Everything is interrelated, so if you declare war, you can expect your citizenry to be upset (they will even send actual angry emails to your real-world account), causing your resource production to go down, which means you can't keep your army well-supplied, and so on and so forth . . . If it sounds complex, that's because it is — this is ambitious stuff — but Verant has done a great job so far of keeping the complexities away from the player while still offering tons of options. Much like in *EverQuest*, the interface is being designed so that people can play to their skill level.

Players will start each game off by choosing a character class to represent their persona in the game. Classes available cover a variety of themes, comprising soldier, diplomat, economist, scientist, spy, and theologian. The catch here is that no class will function as well independently as it will as part of a group. Scientists can make nuclear weapons, but only soldiers can use them. Only a diplomat can initiate martial law if one of your cities gets out of control. The natural result of this state of affairs is a large group of uneasy alliances that must be made if players want to stay competitive. Of course, in the game's final hour, all of those alliances are sure to crack as the remaining players all try to backstab each other in the final step to victory. The spy class is perfect for this element, as they can infiltrate cities and find out valuable information or even encrypt coded messages.

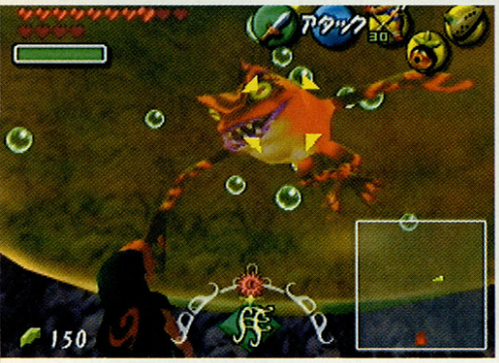
The engine that Verant has created to run this game also has to be quite flexible. To keep the sense of scale, players can actually zoom in on their smallest unit and all of the way out until they have the entire world in their view (complete with any satellites that are orbiting). With air, sea, and land units all available, keeping them realistic at close range is quite a daunting task. Even the little details like the planes being pulled out of storage on a carrier are going to be in so the game will be as realistic as possible.

There is quite a bit of time before *Sovereign* even hits beta, but the crew at Verant already looks to be on track at revolutionizing the way RTSs are played. We dread the hit to productivity this game will cause. — *Blake Fischer*



■ You can zoom all of the way out for a complete world view of the action. Not shown in this shot is the cloud layer that will block visibility and the orbiting satellites

■ Launch planes from your aircraft carrier to gather information, engage enemy fighters, or bomb a friend into the next century



■ Yes, this may be a parallel dimension, but most of Link's enemies still seem to have prominent eyes or mouths just waiting to be shot. Hmmm...

■ NINTENDO 64

LEGEND OF ZELDA: GAIDEN

■ Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **Nintendo** ■ Release Date: **Spring 2000** ■ Origin: **Japan**

A new *Zelda*? So soon? Will this be cool stuff, or just leftovers?

It's only been been 11 months since *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* was released, immediately shooting to the top of everyone's "Ten Best" lists and managing to sell a kajillion more N64s in the process. Despite that game's lengthy four-year development cycle, Link is already being prepped for a return — this time however, mostly without Shigeru Miyamoto.

That's right. According to sources, although Miyamoto is keeping an eye on the project, he's currently busy working on other things. Not to worry, though. The game is being developed by

■ Then again, this being a parallel universe, Link does run into some pretty odd things

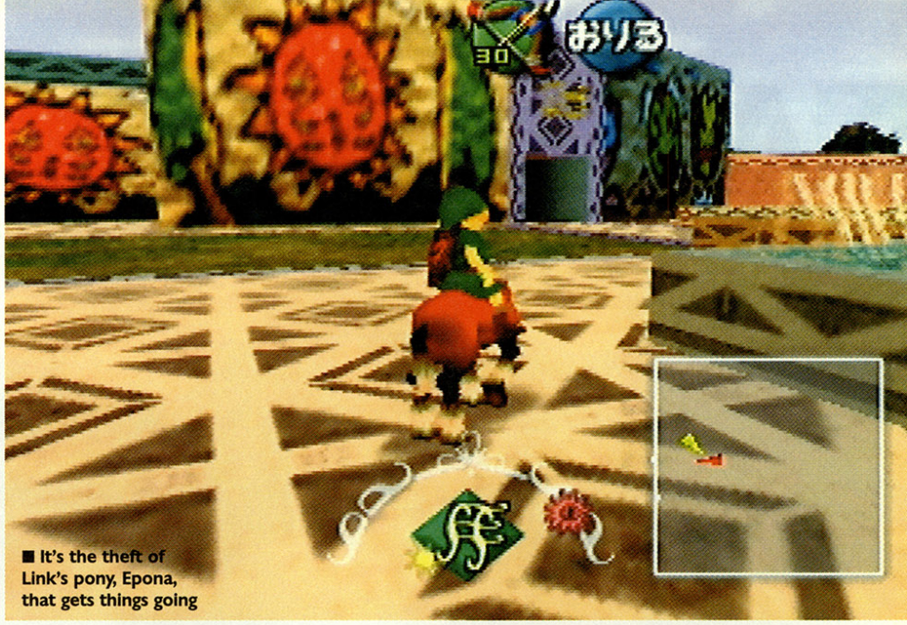
Link is already being prepped for a return — this time however, mostly without Shigeru Miyamoto

essentially the same team that worked with Miyamoto on *Ocarina of Time*, and knowing Miyamoto, if they weren't up to it, he wouldn't have given them his blessing (in fact, he's often downplayed his involvement with *Ocarina of Time*, claiming only to have thought up the ideas while the team implemented them).

That said, this latest game does offer a number of departures from the usual *Zelda* fare. Set some unspecified number of months after the events of *Ocarina of Time*, *Gaiden* begins with Link meeting a mysterious figure in the woods of Hyrule, a masked man calling himself Stalkid. Stalkid steals Link's loyal pony, Epona, and disappears, but when Link follows, he finds himself in a strange parallel dimension — a place that looks a little like Hyrule, but isn't exactly Hyrule. Worse, wherever this place is, the sky is literally falling: the moon will crash into the planet within the next few days and no one knows how to stop it.

Except, maybe, Stalkid, which makes Link's quest to track him down more than just personal.

From a technical standpoint, *Gaiden* actually improves on the already impressive standard set by *Ocarina of Time*. The game requires the use of a 4MB Expansion Pak, running in high-resolution mode with fairly solid framerates. Further, the textures are noticeably more detailed, and in general, every environment seems busier, with



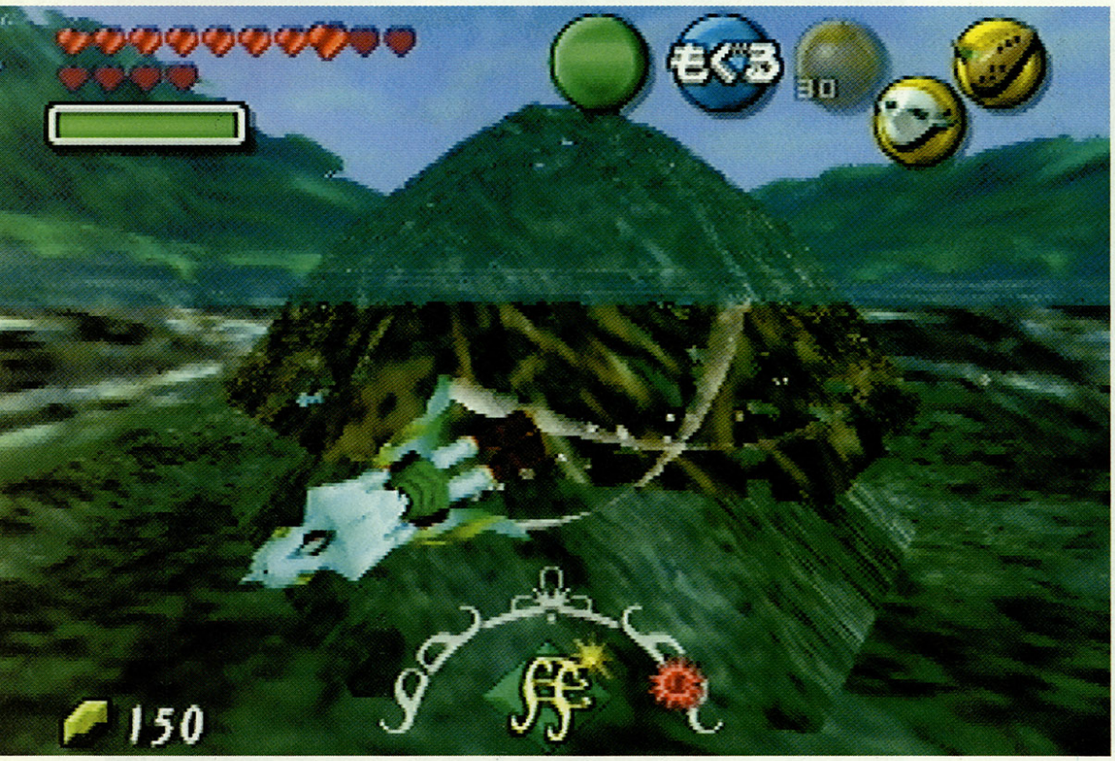
■ It's the theft of Link's pony, Epona, that gets things going

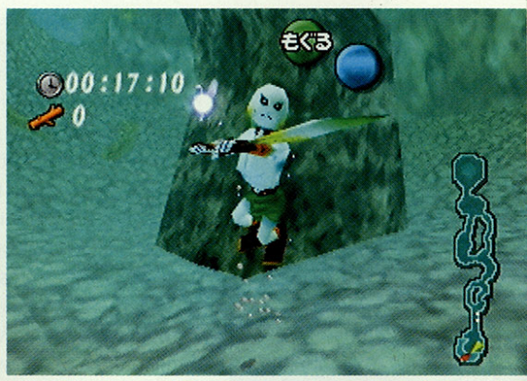
■ Yep, that's a Deku wearing a green elf hat (above). That's because it isn't a Deku, it's Link wearing a Deku mask. *Gaiden*'s main gameplay element lies in Link being able to put on different masks, and gaining the powers and abilities of whatever creature he disguises himself as

GAIDEN?

Besides the current *Zelda*, in past years there have also been *Darius*, *Gradius*, and most famously *Ninja Gaidens*. So just what the heck is a "gaiden," anyway? Well, as it turns out, the literal translation is "supplementary story," or "extra story," or "a little bit of story that goes on outside the main story," but curiously, as a term, it doesn't seem to ever be applied to anything except games.

Shucks, so that probably means no *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Gaiden* in the near future. Oh well.





■ **Although it would be natural to be skeptical given the game's short development time, it's clear the graphics are well up to Nintendo's usual standard**

more objects, characters, and enemies than before.

Perhaps the biggest departure, however, is in *Gaiden*'s basic gameplay mechanic, which nicely hinges on the kind of magic in use in the bizarro Hyrule that Link finds himself in. Again, the place is vaguely familiar, but it operates under very different sets of rules. For example, Link comes across characters with familiar faces, like Ingo, Malon, and even Zelda, but none of them behave quite like we're used to — in fact, at least one good guy in Link's world, Navi, isn't particularly nice at all in the parallel universe.

So too, objects and weapons work very differently in this strange new world, and it turns out the upgrade path to greater abilities and powers isn't found in new weapons or tools as in every other *Zelda* game, but in finding and using masks. Although masks were an integral part of certain puzzles in *Ocarina of Time*, they were used exclusively as disguises. In *Gaiden*, when Link dons a mask, he literally becomes whatever character or creature the mask represents, morphing in a sometimes-amusing, sometimes-disturbing transformation sequence into a new creature — who still, it seems, wears Link's trademark green hat.

Put on a Deku mask, and Link actually turns into a Deku, giving him the ability to spit seeds, walk on water, and use flower blooms to glide through the air. Slipping into a Goron mask enables him to move heavy stones and roll into a lethal spiny wheel, zooming around at high speeds and devastating anything he runs over.

Although further details are sketchy at the present time, rumor has it the final game will feature as many as 20 different masks. Interestingly, each new form also enables Link to play a different instrument — the Deku plays a horn, the Goron a set of drums. Considering the many and varied uses that magic music has been put to in previous *Zelda* titles, we can only speculate how much deeper this may make the gameplay in *Gaiden*.

A 50% complete version was previewed at Nintendo's Spaceworld Expo in Tokyo in late August, wowing audiences and converting a few non-believers who looked on the comparatively short development cycle and lack of Miyamoto's direct involvement with a cynical eye. We at **Next Generation**, of course, reserve final judgment until we see the finished game, but darn if it doesn't look pretty good so far. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

Link comes across characters with familiar faces . . . but none of them behave quite like we're used to

■ **As with many *Zelda* adventures, *Gaiden* includes a number of mini-games. Here, Link races for fun and profit as a Goron**

Alphas

■ The forest giants are just as powerful as their Antonica-based brethren, and they're none too happy about having to share the continent with the evil Iksar

■ ONLINE (PC)

EVERQUEST: THE RUINS OF KUNARK

■ Publisher: **989 Studios** ■ Developer: **Verant** ■ Release Date: **March 2000** ■ Origin: **US**

Can sleepless fans cope with an even larger online world?

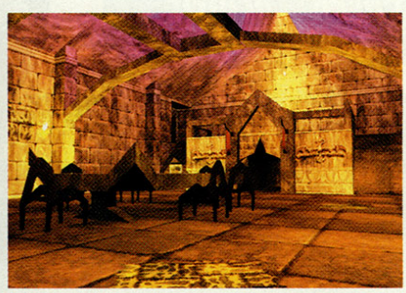
FREE STUFF!

If you're too much of a cheapskate to buy the expansion, there are still some new areas that are being added to the general game. On the continent of Odus, a whole city of Erudite Necromancers is being designed along with a nasty dungeon underneath. Back on Antonica, players can expect a new area in Solusek Ro to come in an upcoming patch.

Some call it "EverSmack," to others it's "NeverRest," and while the name may vary, the addiction to online adventuring in *EverQuest* is becoming one of the greatest productivity killers in recent memory. Verant, keyed in to the ongoing success of its title, is already working on a way to make the experience even more involving with its first expansion pack, *The Ruins Of Kunark*.

The expansion is in actuality a whole new continent that is being added to the game. For a nominal upgrade fee, players will be given a CD which will grant them access to all new zones, new items, and even a new race. Don't worry, though — even if you don't buy the expansion, you still get to see all of the new items and player characters — you just never can go to the new areas or start as the new race.

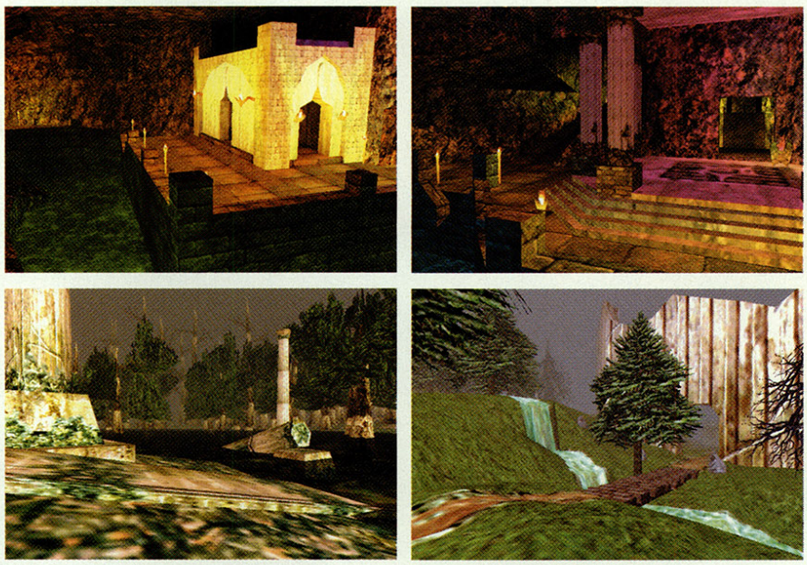
This time, the storyline revolves around a lizardlike race called the Iksar (this is the new race players can use) on



■ **The new areas of Norrath feature higher polygon counts, more detailed textures, and plenty of hidden surprises for those brave enough to look**

the island of Kunark. The Iksar are an elder race, like the elves, so they will have many character classes to choose from. While the list of classes isn't final yet (it needs extensive testing), they will definitely be able to play as monks — complete with new special attacks that use the tail. At one point in history, the Iksar were much like the Romans in that they ruled a great portion of the world. Unfortunately for them, they were not the kindliest of races; as their civilization started to decline, they were brought down by slave revolts and some very angry enemies.

Now, the island of Kunark is mostly in ruins. The Iksar have one main city left, located in the middle of the continent, which is all that remains of their once-mighty civilization. Luckily, since the Iksar only hold down a small part of the continent, most of the areas are unexplored and unpopulated. This is great news for adventurers because that means that there are lots of new dungeons hidden in the ruined cities of the Iksar — and in those dungeons, many new monsters and magic items. All in all, there will be somewhere between 12 to 24 new zones for players to play in (Brad McQuaid, the producer of the game, confesses, "If I've learned anything, it's not to commit to hard numbers.").



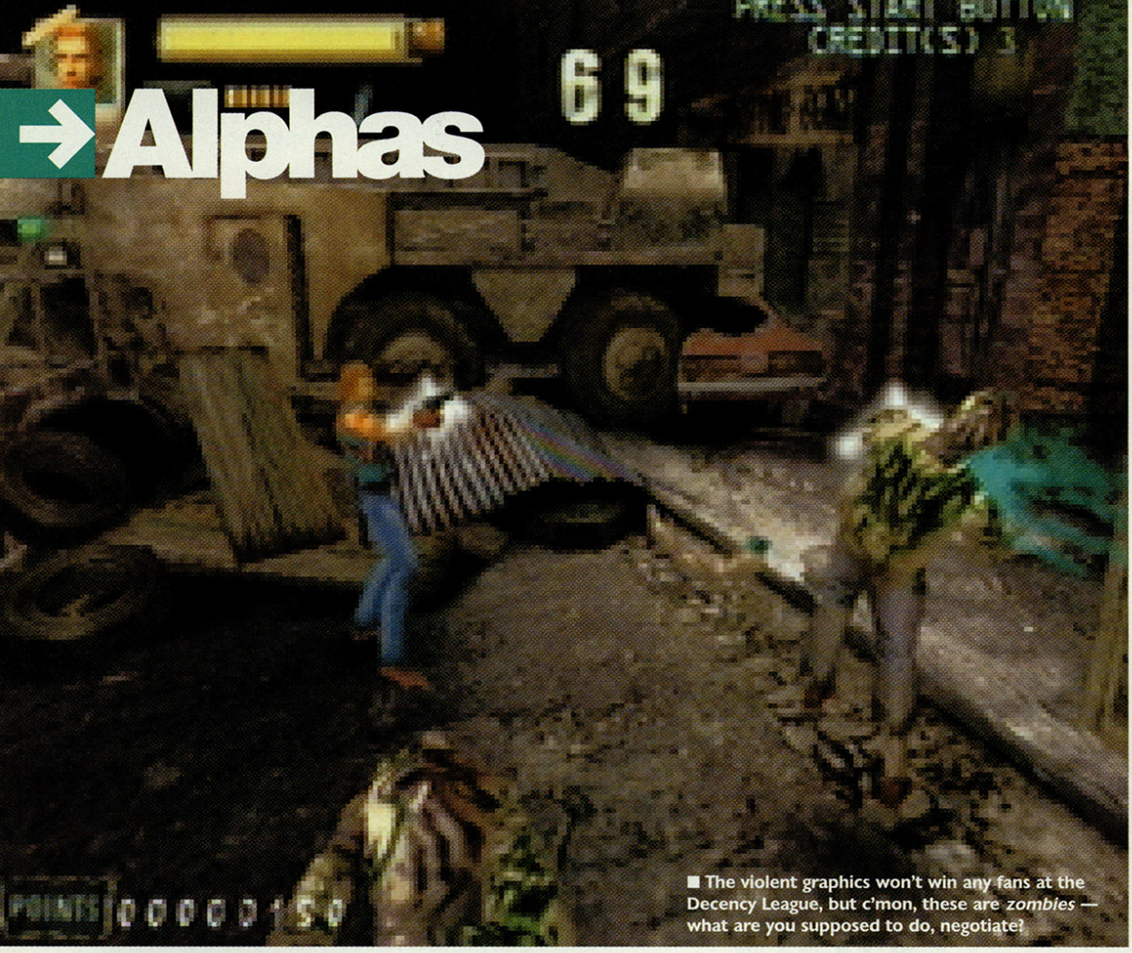
■ **Kunark used to be the base of the Iksar's world-spanning empire, but in the last several centuries it has fallen apart. All that's left are the ruins of their once-great cities**

In one forest we were treated to seeing the trees all blowing softly in the wind — then we were pounded by a 40th-level forest giant

Besides the new content, the technology has been upgraded substantially as well. Players who purchase the expansion will be treated to bigger textures, a more distant horizon, and higher polygon counts. In addition to the sharper look, the environments also benefit from much more animation than in previous zones. In one forest we ran through, we were treated to the trees all softly blowing in the wind — then we were pounded by a 40th-level forest giant. Not good at all.

McQuaid stresses that *EverQuest* is an evolutionary game. As the game goes on, players will constantly be treated to better incarnations of the technology, better content, and even more areas to explore and conquer. There is still at least one more continent in the works, and if there is one thing players can count on, it's never sleeping again. — *Blake Fischer*

■ **There are plenty of new high- and low-level monsters to fight like the Demi-Lich (below) or even other Iksar (bottom left). Even the monsters that have been seen before like the goblins (upper left) all have higher poly counts and much more animation**



■ The violent graphics won't win any fans at the Decency League, but c'mon, these are *zombies* — what are you supposed to do, negotiate?

■ The ability to shoot while falling (above) may not be practical, but it sure is cool. The innovative aiming system is shown off below

■ DREAMCAST

ZOMBIE'S REVENGE

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega** ■ Release Date: **Q1 2000** ■ Origin: **Japan**

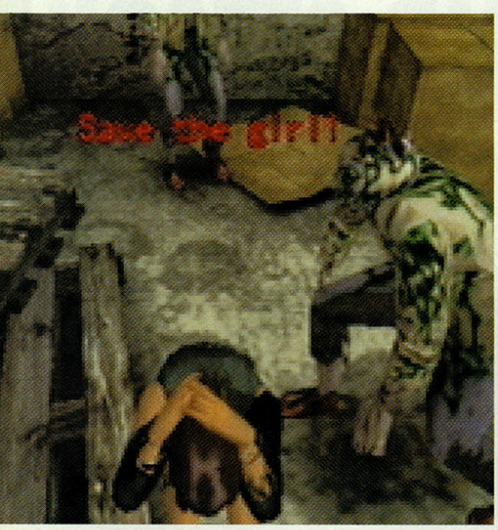
Resident Evil light? Third-person *House of the Dead*? Whatever you call it, it's coming to Dreamcast

The dead are restless. That's the premise of Sega's latest entry into the world of voodoo. Although it's not clear how wide the distribution of the arcade version will be in the US, the game will be coming home on Dreamcast early next year.

Gameplay will be familiar to *Diehard Arcade* players — third-person fighting and shooting — but while that game's moves often seemed choppy, *Zombie's Revenge* features extremely smooth motion and excellent graphics, along with several nice touches like the ability to fire while falling. With keys, medical packs, and plenty of different guns and ammo to pick up, the gameplay is also deeper than the *Final Fight* style offered by *Diehard*.

The major hook? Story. It's a heavy sci-fi, conspiracy-tinged epic that features (of course) an evil corporation whose products are responsible (of course) for the zombification of your enemies. The story is revealed via branching paths and well-done in-game cut scenes a la *Time Crisis*.

Will the game be a straight port of the arcade experience? We asked Sega of America Producer Jason Kuo: "There are some things we want to incorporate beyond the arcade game, but I don't want to talk about them." Why not? "SoJ hasn't approved them yet, and if they don't, we're going to use them in our next game, so I don't want to give anyone else our ideas." Fair enough. But even if the game is nothing but a port, the combination of action and story should be enough to ensure a bigger audience than the game has had so far in US arcades. — *Chris Charla*



■ Amid all the carnage (right), there are plenty of innocent victims to be saved (above), just as in *House of the Dead*

HOW TO MAKE A ZOMBIE

Get yourself 1 1/2 oz dark rum, 3/4 oz Jamaica rum, 3/4 oz light rum, 3/4 oz pineapple juice, 3/4 oz papaya juice, 1 oz lime juice, and 1 teaspoon powdered sugar. Shake ingredients with ice, strain, and garnish with a pineapple wheel.

Alternately, add a near-lethal dose of pufferfish *tetrodotoxin*, which will cause a death-like condition in your victim. After he is buried (this works best in countries that don't embalm the dead), dig him up, give him a massive dose of the hallucinogenic drug *datura stramonium*, tell him you own his soul, and set him to work in the sugar cane fields, administering a small maintenance dose of toxin daily. Don't allow your zombie to taste salt.

Alphas

■ Shortcuts are the name of the game and it takes many races before you know them all

■ As far as we know, this is the only game that features planes crashing into the buildings around you

THE INSPIRATION: *OUT RUN*

Released in 1986, *Out Run* changed the face of racing games by offering advanced graphics, incredible music, and the ability to choose different forks in the road to explore your world. Of course, many just remember the attractive blonde riding in the passenger seat of the Ferrari.

■ DREAMCAST

ROADSTERS

■ Publisher: **Titus** ■ Developer: **Player 1** ■ Release Date: **December** ■ Origin: **US**

High-speed racing meets Mother Nature

Creating a compelling racer is tough. "What racers need are things that involve the player," confides George Weising, producer at Player 1. "I want people to get the feel that they are controlling drivers with personalities going on adventures." So goes the concept behind the arcade racer *Roadsters*. Taking inspiration from Sega's *Out Run* and *Power Drift*, the team has been working hard to create a racer with lots of personality, high speeds, and some unique twists that will hopefully put their product ahead of the pack.

The most compelling of these twists is the idea that each track has its own scripted "adventure" to go along with the race. For example, while racing through the Panama Canal area, an earthquake will occur. While the screen is shaking around you, the road will raise and lower in spots, bridges will collapse, and the layout of the track will change — but, of course, the race goes on. On other tracks, we witnessed a plane crashing into a building right in front of us; an avalanche; an eclipse; and a brushfire that gradually darkens the sky with smoke so that your visibility drops throughout the race. Overall, there are a total of eight different tracks to race on, each with its own disaster to overcome.

With up to four players able to play at once, *Roadsters* may be the fix that racing fans are looking for this holiday season. — *Blake Fischer*

■ The smoke from the brushfires (Player 2) eventually causes the whole track to become much darker (Player 3)

■ Is this shot from Kansas? You'll have to pay attention to where the tornado is heading so you can take shortcuts to avoid it

■ "In a four-person deathmatch," says Dienstbier, "there are no bots available. If you're playing with two people, you can load in three or four bots. With only person, you can throw in five bots. But we're still tweaking those numbers a little, based on performance"

■ By completing the single-player and cooperative scenario modes with different characters, players will unlock the 17 characters available for deathmatch

■ NINTENDO 64

TUROK RAGE WARS

■ Publisher: **Acclaim Entertainment** ■ Developer: **Acclaim Studios Austin** ■ Release Date: **November 1999** ■ Origin: **US**

Will this deathmatch-based title frag its way into the hearts of N64 players?

DINOSAUR HUNTERS TODAY...

If you want to hunt virtual dinosaurs, by all means pick up any of the *Turok* games. But to be a modern dinosaur hunter, you might consider becoming a paleontologist. Want to get even more hardcore? We recommend Ichnology — the study of fossil tracks, trails, and footprints. It's probably more exciting than playing *Deer Hunter*.

Unless you live in a cave, or refuse to follow first-person shooters, you know there's a slew of multiplayer-intensive PC titles in the works, including the highly anticipated *Unreal Tournament* and *Quake III: Arena*. But this type of game isn't sticking only to PC — *Turok: Rage Wars* will bring home multiplayer components in place of a longer, single-player adventure.

"The entire game really is a deathmatch," says Dave Dienstbier, creative director for Acclaim Studios Austin, and designer of the original *Turok* and *Turok 2*. "Our scenario mode is the single-player mode, but it can also be played cooperatively with another player. Essentially it's deathmatch; you go from level to level trying to attain certain goals — for example, get a certain amount of frags, get a certain number of team frags, or get them in a certain amount of time."

The bots in the scenario mode will begin as very easy to beat, with simple

■ **Are you a deathmatch wizard? *Rage Wars* offers players 19 different categories in which to gain high rankings. Securing a number-one ranking may unlock a new item or feature**

Alphas

■ Players can customize their weapon selection, and take a set of five weapons into a deathmatch

level designs, but the game will ramp up considerably, training players to be highly competitive deathmatchers. The maps will become more sophisticated, with staple obstacles such as lava and new ones like a poisonous liquid that eats away not at your health, but your ammo. The bots will increase in skill and number, and players will also face four bosses with superior firepower.

Aside from the scenario mode, the game includes standard multiplayer deathmatch, team battles, frag tag, and a time trial mode. In frag tag, players can now be turned into a monkey, chicken, or compy dinosaur.

"There are also 50 awards that you can win in the game," says Dienstbier. The awards are based on various criteria, including total victories, total frags in a certain amount of time, total lifetime frags, etc. Dienstbier feels the awards, some of which will unlock hidden characters and skins, are an important way of getting players to build what he calls "career characters."

"In deathmatch, you obviously have to come to grips with dying a lot," says Dienstbier, "but at the same time, we felt that it's too bad that people's characters are totally disposable to them. So we've made decisions that let people tailor characters more to their own tastes."

If over time, players can deck their characters out in new skins, win medals, and advance in rankings, they will assuredly grow more attached to them.

"If a week after we've both bought the game, and you came over to my house," Dienstbier hypothesizes, "and I have this cool futuristic *Turok* skin, you'll want to know how I got it. And it might be because I'm a better shot, and the skin was the result of an accuracy award."

While he's not designing levels for *Rage Wars*, Dienstbier knows from past experience that deathmatch map design

■ New weapons include the aptly named *Inflator*, which cartoonishly inflates your opponents, and the Chestburster, which delivers a round loaded with an embryonic alien. After connecting with an opposing player, it incubates fairly quickly and bursts from their body to do massive damage. We love it, but still wonder where Acclaim got the idea

"Our goal is to deliver more of a *Quake*-style deathmatch than a *GoldenEye*-style deathmatch. We want a faster pace and higher frag count"

— Creative Director Dave Dienstbier

■ Inspired by *Unreal*, each of 16 weapons includes an alternate firing mode, essentially making two weapons in one

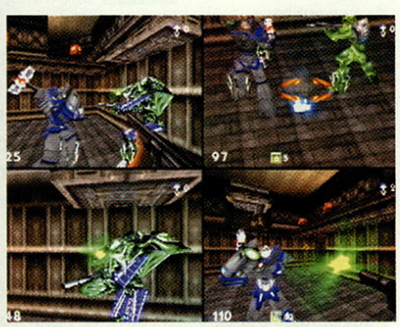
is a complete departure from traditional single-player maps. ("It requires very, very focused design," he says — especially considering the limitations a four-player split-screen imposes.)

"When you split a screen," says Dienstbier, "you exponentially increase your overhead, both in CPU and draw time, so the levels have to become simpler in many ways."

After a recent editor's day, some of the game-industry press told Dienstbier that some of the levels felt too small.

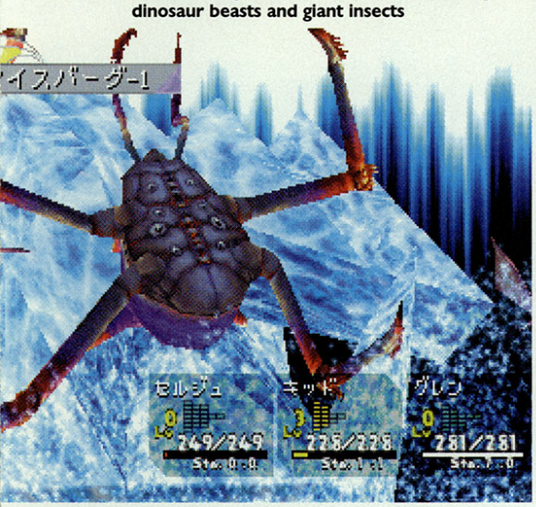
"We've expanded some of the maps." Dienstbier replies, wisely noting that game-industry journalists give some of the best feedback. "Still, our goal is to deliver more of a *Quake*-style deathmatch than a *GoldenEye*-style deathmatch. We want a faster pace and higher frag count, which is part of the reason why we've condensed the maps."

Sounds good to us. — *Tom Russo*

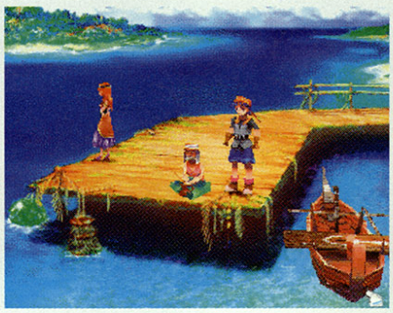


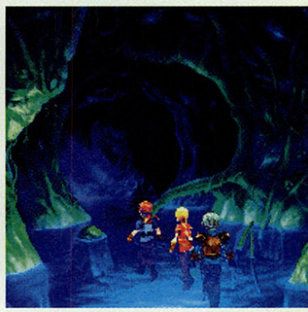
■ *Rage Wars* maps have been kept small so players will constantly be in harm's way. However, some levels are being expanded after recent feedback from an Editors' Day

■ As usual, the game presents a variety of interesting and diverse baddies including dinosaur beasts and giant insects



■ The incredibly rich color palette used by the new *Chrono* team imbues each scene with fantastic depth and the vitality of an anime cartoon





■ PLAYSTATION

CHRONO CROSS

■ Publisher: **Square** ■ Developer: **Square** ■ Release Date: **Winter 1999** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Just in time? No, just in between worlds...

Four years ago, Square's *Chrono Trigger* quickly became an RPG fan favorite. And no wonder, with its complex plot, excellent music, likable characters, and a quirky humor that often poked fun at RPG conventions.

■ The game uses a modified version of the original *Chrono Trigger* battle system, allowing precise realtime control over each playable character

Now Square has revived the franchise with a new set of characters and a new development team. Although the original "dream team" of character designer Akira Toriyama and *Final Fantasy* guru Hironobu Sakaguchi have both moved on, the current team is none too shabby, led by producer Hiromichi Tanaka and director Masato Kato (*Final Fantasy I, II,* and *III*), with characters by anime artist Nobuteru Yuuki (*Record of the Lodoss War*).

The story centers on a youth named Serge and his gutsy, knife-wielding female sidekick, Kid (who, naturally, favors short skirts and midriff-baring tops). They battle Yamaneko, an evil cat/human hybrid. Although story details are few at present, the game is again set in Guardia, the Tolkien-esque land of the original, but instead of traveling in time, the plot involves travels to a parallel dimension, one which mirrors the real Guardia, and anything that occurs in one dimension has direct consequences in the other.

For combat, Square has abandoned the old turn-based engine. Instead, a highly strategic setup allows players to give commands to their characters, and provides a thorough range of physical, as well as elemental (i.e., magical), attacks.

What's really impressive are the beautiful visuals. With a camera that gets much closer to the characters than most RPG fare, and some amazing light and shadow work, *Chrono Cross* could be a visual masterpiece as well as a return to gaming pleasures of old. — *Nigel Edge*

■ The artists have made excellent use of light and shadow to create a variety of atmospheric settings. This inviting tavern is especially effective

A RANT

Unlike almost every other RPG in which you get attacked relentlessly, at random, the original *Chrono Trigger* was notable in that you could see the monsters and avoid them if you wanted to (or deliberately attack them, if you wanted to build up experience). Budding RPG designers, take note: This was a *wonderful* feature, making it possible to actually walk from here to there without having the game come to a grinding halt every 10 seconds for a battle.

Why haven't more RPGs done this? Beats us.

■ When several arcade cabinets are linked together, players can take on enemies as a group, or even attack each other, depending on their mood

SPAWN: THE LEGACY

Every *Spawn* game made up to this point has really sucked. Here are some quotes from an early review:

From NG 38 *Spawn: The Eternal* on PlayStation:
" [Spawn] looks like an overly large circus freak, complete with a hunchback and a slight limp."
"...We haven't learned a damn thing in all the years of movie licensed games, from *E.T.* up to this atrocity."
The rating: ★

■ ARCADE

SPAWN

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom** ■ Release Date: **Fall 1999** ■ Origin: **Japan**

A spawn of hell makes a hell of an arcade game

If you haven't heard of *Spawn*, you must have spent the last seven years under a rock (or maybe a tombstone). Since its May 1992 debut, this comic-book series has exploded from a cult favorite to undying and (undead) fame: it's sold more than 133 million copies worldwide, it has an animated series on HBO, and it even had a moderately successful motion picture. Unfortunately, early ventures into the gaming world have been bad for *Spawn* (including horrible PlayStation, SNES, and Game Boy games), but Capcom, with its arcade pedigree and top-notch teams in Japan, could be the license's savior. The title character is an assassinated CIA agent who returns from hell in order to visit his still-living wife. As part of his devilish pact, Spawn is given unholy powers and ordered to lead hell's army on the mortal plane. Instead, he betrays his demonic "employers," defecting from the infernal legions and dedicating his supernatural abilities to battling evil.

Obviously, it's an ideal arcade concept, and Capcom has done its best to take the player into the authentic world of *Spawn* via new and classic characters, dazzling CG graphics, and a haunting, action-packed storyline. (All approved by the creator of the comic series, Todd McFarlane, no less.)

Gameplay takes place in ten levels of action in which players must progress

Players must progress from the mundane world to the evil world of "metaphysical hyper-reality"

■ There are plenty of weapons lying around for you to use. If you can't find one you like, you also have some "built in" weapons like Spawn's chain attack

■ Overkill is one of the nasty characters from the comic series who uses cybernetic technology to take on Spawn

from the mundane world of everyday, earthly reality to the hidden evil world of "metaphysical hyper-reality." Each level has Spawn (or whichever character you are playing) fighting against others in arena-type combat. In a nice twist, while you send some villains to their unearthly reward, others are recruited to Spawn's righteous cause. Spawn and his team work their way up — or down — the demonic chain of command toward a final confrontation with the dreaded Malebolgia, who must be conquered and dispatched to the infernal regions. To increase the replay value of the game, each character will have his or her own unique ending which corresponds to the original *Spawn* storyline.

Capcom's *Spawn* will feature at least 11 playable characters, including some bad guys, and possibly six or seven hidden characters. Besides many of the series standbys, there are also going to be two original characters created just for the game. Each player is equipped with a wide range of diabolical weapons: guns, swords, spears, grenades, and many more (including land mines!). Some weapons can be used by any character, while others are character-specific.

Running on a Sega Naomi board, *Spawn* offers a truly 3D world of polygonal characters and settings, allowing players to change viewpoints and characters at will. Players can also move their characters in any direction and interact fully with the environment. The game mostly presents a POV directly behind the character you're playing, but it automatically cuts to a wider view during intense battle sequences.

Solo players can engage in Boss Attack Mode, taking on bosses in each stage and attempting to defeat Malebolgia in the climactic battle. An extra challenge arrives with Team Battle Mode, where two teams of two players each struggle for sheer survival. As many as four arcade cabinets can be linked for simultaneous action, so up to four can roar into the wild Battle Royal Mode where everybody becomes everybody else's enemy! Hopefully, if the title performs well in the arcades, the Dreamcast version (a predictable port) will support some of the multiplayer options over the modem. Sheer chaos! — *Marcus Webb*

■ Players don't necessarily have to play as Spawn; there is a large rogues' gallery to choose from. Even better, as you get farther into the game, you will earn even more characters to play

■ PC

NOX

■ Publisher: **Westwood** ■ Developer: **Westwood** ■ Release Date: **Winter 1999** ■ Origin: **US**

Is speed the key to the action RPG?

■ *Nox* makes incredible use of lighting and pyrotechnics to enhance the all-out action

On the surface, *Nox* looks a lot like many of the other action RPGs on the market. And it's true: *Nox* doesn't really innovate in graphics, but what should make the game so fascinating (and downright addictive) are the new styles of gameplay and the sheer speed at which everything moves.

■ Each class has its own unique adventure and locations so the single-player game will take a long time to complete

The key to the game lies in the characters you can play. The character types are standard (warrior, wizard, conjurer), but their abilities aren't. Oh sure, the tank-like warrior excels at hand-to-hand fighting, but in addition to standard spell-casting, the wizard has the nasty ability to lay teleports and traps for people to stumble into. A combo system has been implemented so you can actually string your spells together to achieve all sorts of brutal effects. The conjuror's skill involves summoning creatures to fight for him as well as charming monsters he runs into along the way.

Single-player is fun, with a long and absorbing quest mode for each class, but the real thrill of the game is in the multiplayer. Between the plethora of tricks and traps to avoid, the chain lightning arcing through everything in its path, the hordes of creatures running around, and the heavily armed warriors fighting their way through everything,

■ Chain lightning I: just one of the awesome offensive spells used by the wizard class

Nox proves its worth by providing one of the most unique and compelling deathmatch (and CTF) experiences we've played yet.

While *Nox* is, admittedly, not as technologically impressive as some of its newer cousins, Westwood hopes that the solid and innovative gameplay of this title will be enough to stand out with seasoned action/RPG fans.

— *Blake Fischer*

■ The lowering of the camera to directly behind your character dramatically changes the feel of the game from the original

■ DREAMCAST

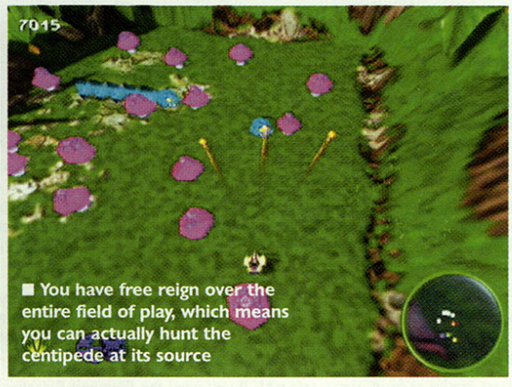
CENTIPEDE

■ Publisher: **Hasbro** ■ Developer: **Realsports** ■ Release Date: **December 1999** ■ Origin: **UK**

Famous arthropod makes Dreamcast its next port of call

Starting with (the best-forgotten) *Frogger* and its acquisition of most of the Atari rights, Hasbro is moving into the world of hardcore games. *Centipede* on PSX and PC was the first effort with an Atari license, and now the game is coming to Dreamcast.

The game is almost a straight port of the PC version, although the textures and models have been upgraded slightly — Dreamcast is a much more powerful machine than the original target-spec PC. Given how rare shooters are today, the 3D gameplay is pretty novel — its only competition on Dreamcast at first will be the execrable *Expendable* — and the addition of a classic mode is a nice touch. (Real classic fans will want to wait for the full Dreamcast classic packs rumored to be coming soon).



■ You have free reign over the entire field of play, which means you can actually hunt the centipede at its source

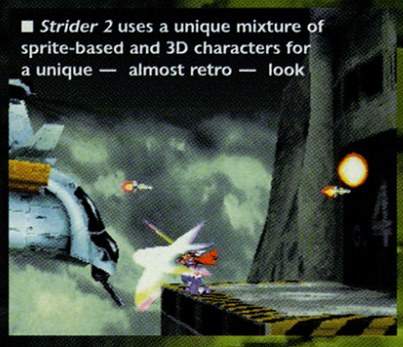
What's really telling though, is that it is coming to Dreamcast at all: Hasbro was one of the last fence sitters on the system, and its decision to gear up for Sega's machine leaves EA (along, of course, with Sony and Nintendo) as the only major publisher not on the system.

Hasbro doesn't go in for half-measures, either: if it's on Dreamcast, it's on Dreamcast for the long haul, which bodes well for Sega in 2000, especially if Hasbro's forthcoming titles are as much of an improvement as *Centipede* is on *Frogger*.

— Chris Charla

WHAT ABOUT THE GRASSHOPPER?

In the original *Centipede*, a test of the memory revealed all the game's characters, including a mysterious grasshopper. How do you get the grasshopper to appear in the game itself? You can't. According to game god Ed Logg, creator of *Centipede* (as well as *Asteroids*, *Gauntlet*, and *Rush 64*), the grasshopper originally was going to bounce around and eat mushrooms. When the spider was added to the game, though, the grasshopper was no longer needed, but he was left in the game's ROMs "for fun," says Logg.



■ *Strider 2* uses a unique mixture of sprite-based and 3D characters for a unique — almost retro — look

■ ARCADE

STRIDER 2

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom** ■ Release Date: **Winter 1999** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Capcom's ninja master slices out of retirement

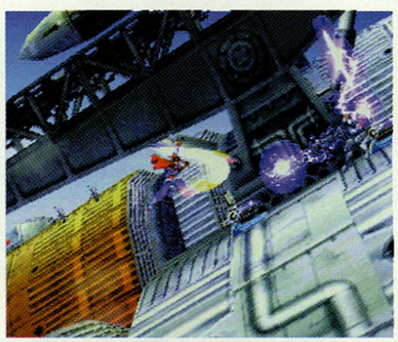
It's been a weird decade for Strider Hiryu. After a flurry of activity in the late '80s and early '90s — which saw the release of his first arcade game, followed by a totally different NES adventure, and a mass of home coin-op conversions (the ST, Amiga, C64, PC engine, and Genesis were all recipients) — his career bombed. Capcom did start work on a second *Strider* arcade title using proprietary M2-based technology, but then M2 fell through, and now the game has arrived on a somewhat unusual PlayStation-based board. Our best guess is that this re-revival has been prompted by Strider Hiryu's popularity in *Marvel vs. Capcom*.

Interestingly, Capcom has taken the cautious route updating this title. While *Strider* was a 2D side-scrolling platform actioner in a mold all of its own, *Strider 2* uses 3D backgrounds but combines 2D and 3D approaches to character design, retaining the original's scrolling gameplay. The new game, however, allows the player to move in any direction (rather than following a strict left-to-right route), giving a greater depth of interaction with the environments.

Other than that, it's business as usual. Hiryu must do battle with an evil collective known as the Light Sword Cyphers, through a series of atmospherically dark manga-style environments. These locations combine gothic castles with futuristic spaceships and underground bases to create a esoteric collision of visual styles. The new 3D characters and bosses also work well, but this is essentially a faithful reproduction of old-school arcade action, replete with simple interface and snappy gameplay. While players might be unforgiving of the dated PlayStation look, the gameplay should be enough to win them over.

— Nigel Edge

■ *Strider* has all of the moves we've come to know and love — plus some new surprises



■ While the look is different, the feel of *Strider 2* is exactly like the original arcade game

THE OTHER *STRIDER*?

While Capcom would like you to believe that *Strider 2* is the first sequel of the series, there was actually another *Strider 2* published back on Genesis. Unfortunately, the US Gold game failed to live up to even a little bit of the legacy of the first game and has been forgotten by all but the hardcore (who wish they could forget).

Milestones

Next Generation's monthly update on tomorrow's games

■ Spins a web any size. Catches crooks just like flies. Watch out, here comes a Spider-Man!

■ PLAYSTATION

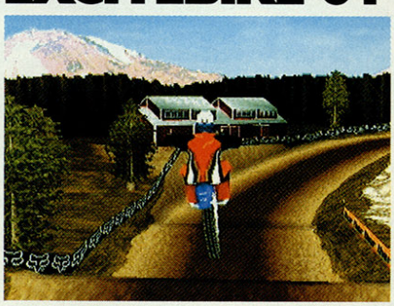
SPIDERMAN

Games like *Spiderman*, *Donkey Kong 64*, and *Excitebike 64* prove that the last generation of systems may be down, but not out, yet. On the **Next Generation** front, however, Dreamcast looks to be getting a killer RPG next year in the form of *Eternal Arcadia*, and US gamers are being treated to *Evolution*, the first RPG in the US, this November. Also, who could forget Blizzard's awesome-looking *Warcraft 3*?

■ *Spiderman* integrates such Spidey standbys as swinging on your webbing (what does it attach to?) and climbing on walls. If the game plays as nice as it looks, Neversoft could have another winner

■ NINTENDO 64

EXCITEBIKE 64

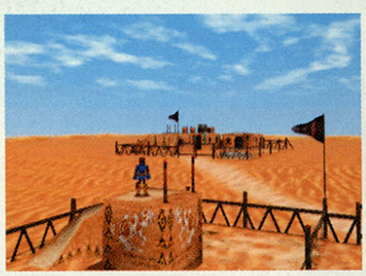


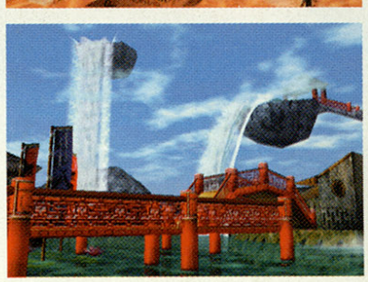
■ Nintendo's sequel to Miyamoto's classic plays more like *Motocross Madness* than the original game. One of the best features kept from the NES version is the easy-to-use track editor for wannabe designers

■ Originally, this title was thought to be the next in the *Phantasy Star* lineup of games because it shares much of the same design team. Instead, it is a unique RPG set in a totally original world

■ DREAMCAST

ETERNAL ARCADIA

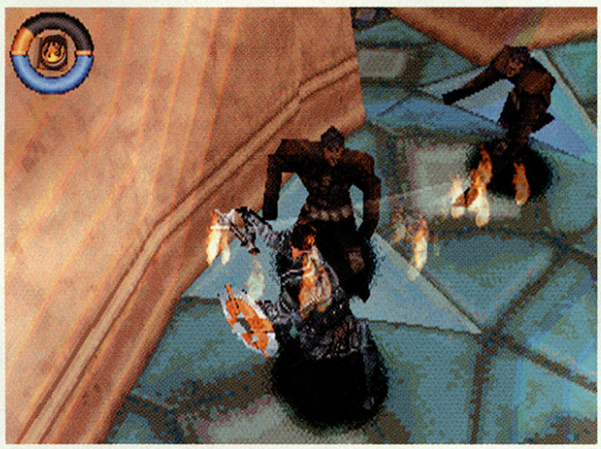




■ Players in *Eternal Arcadia* live on islands floating in the sky and use giant airships to explore undiscovered reaches while avoiding dangerous enemies such as the dreaded Black Sky Pirates

■ PLAYSTATION

CRUSADERS OF MIGHT & MAGIC



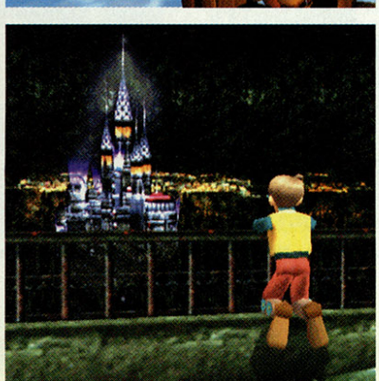
■ PlayStation has been needing a good action/adventure/RPG for quite some time, and *Crusaders* looks to fit the bill perfectly. While the graphics can't compare to those of the next-generation systems, the gameplay looks to be solid and addictive

■ NINTENDO 64

DONKEY KONG 64

■ Nintendo's AAA title for the holidays continues to impress with tight gameplay and sharp graphics

■ Vyse, the lead character in the game, is a member of the Blue Sky Pirates — a group that doesn't attack the weak and helpless but instead prefers to attack strong, heavily guarded ships. Aika, the female lead in the game, serves aboard the same ship as Vyse



■ N64, PLAYSTATION

WWF WRESTLEMANIA 2000

■ THQ's newest wrestling title boasts a modified version of the *WCW Revenge* engine with added animation and the most in-depth create-a-wrestler mode ever

Milestones

■ PC

WARCRAFT 3

■ Blizzard's latest update to the classic series adds all-new 3D environments as well as many new RPG elements

■ DREAMCAST

EVOLUTION

■ Randomly generated dungeons are the key to this otherwise traditional RPG, and they ensure hours of replayability. Ubi Soft has secured the American rights to this one and is preparing for a November release

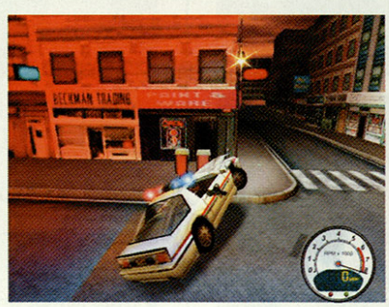
■ PLAYSTATION

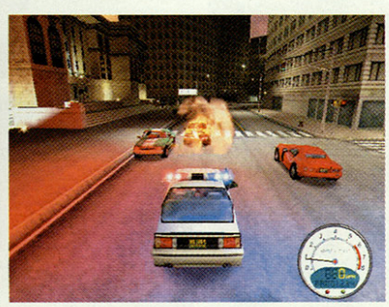
WU TANG: SHAOLIN STYLE

■ Four-player fighting from the team that did *Thrill Kill*. We expect some serious carnage

■ DREAMCAST

DEADLY PURSUIT





■ High-speed police chases are the theme of Fox's offbeat racing game

Where the hell is game design going?

With all the realtime genre-blending, will traditional genres exist in the future? Or is the bell tolling for...

THE DEATH OF THE GENRE?

Will the new experiences generated by advancing technology kill traditional genres?

Next Generation polls the game industry's innovators on the future of game design

(Screenshot of Westwood's forthcoming *C&C: Renegade*)

"The advantage of having played the *C&C* world," says Louis Castle, Westwood's VP of Creative Development, "is knowing the interactions of the world and 'the rules.' For example, if you destroy a power station, then the Obelisks of Light don't work. Most of the units in the *C&C* world are abstractions of real-world objects, so I think knowing *C&C* is only a slight edge. If you are great at other shooters, the strategy elements may take you by surprise. Overall it should be an environment that rewards multiple styles of play"

C&C RENEGADE

Look around. More and more, a new game is likely to be described as an "action/adventure with RPG elements," or "realtime-strategy with an arcade component." Many games simply no longer fit into the little genre boxes we've so carefully carved and nurtured since we plugged into *Pong* — and that's a good thing. With continually evolving hardware for PC, and a new round of console hardware emerging this year and next, it's time to look forward at the future of game design, to seek out new experiences, and ask: will traditional games exist in the future, or are we approaching the end of games as we know them?

Game Genres: Endangered Species?

Game genres come and go. 2D shooters were huge during the 16-bit era, but died on 32-bit platforms (*In the Hunt 2*, anyone?).

"The current genre segmentation will probably seem irrelevant or even antithetical to the game designs of the future" – Gabe Newell, Valve

Likewise, the 2D platformer is also all but gone, except on Game Boy. Even the venerable adventure game is now almost dead, with only LucasArts and a few straggling click-ware games even attempting to continue the genre commercially. But more and more, the whole concept of a single-genre game — of any genre — is starting to die.

Don't get us wrong: there are certainly "genre" games still being made, but more and more, top designers — Mikami and Miyamoto on console, Spector and Newell on PC — are straying from traditional definitions about what a game can or should be.

"I've been through hell," says *Deus Ex*'s Warren Spector, "trying to explain what kind of game *Deus Ex* is — action or roleplaying. We even argue about that with the team."

As **Next Generation** pries deeper into the trend of genre-busting, we've tapped a wellspring of developers with a history of successful products that haven't followed established formulas. Because most of the recent innovation has been on PC, we talked to several prominent innovators there, starting with Gabe Newell, president of Valve Software (and, in a previous life, the man who oversaw the development of Windows at Microsoft). We asked Newell if *Half-Life* and the forthcoming *Team Fortress 2* were conscious attempts to step outside the bounds of their respective genre.

"With *Half-Life*," says Newell, "the incorporation of adventure and story elements was there from the beginning." Instead of focusing on a specific genre, Newell explains the team spent a

10 TOP Genre-busters currently available:

1. ***Half-Life*** (PC)
2. ***Diablo*** (PC)
3. ***Battlezone*** (PC)
4. ***The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*** (N64)
5. ***Uprising 2*** (PC)
6. ***Rainbow Six*** (PC)
7. ***System Shock 2*** (PC)
8. ***Tobal #1*** (PlayStation)
9. ***Guardian's Crusade*** (PlayStation)
10. ***Jade Cocoon*** (PlayStation)

TEAM FORTRESS 2

"Technology choices should be the consequence of your design objectives," Valve's Gabe Newell says, "not the driver of your design objectives. For *Team Fortress 2*, we want to push really hard on the social and team aspects of gaming, which is leading us to incorporate technologies, like the scalable model technology, and game interfaces, like the top-down RTS view of the world for the commander"

great deal more time thinking about the overall experience for the player. "We thought of the story and interactivity as a way to make *Half-Life* a better game," he continues, "rather than as a deliberate attempt to make a genre hybrid."

As games become more sophisticated and incorporate multiple genre elements, they become far more interesting to play. *Half-Life*'s success, for instance, has shown that there can be more to first-person games than shooting. An adventure requires problem-solving skills. A shooter requires reflexes. But *Half-Life* requires problem-solving skills *and* reflexes, and is all the more compelling because of it. And in fact, to *Half-Life* veterans, subsequent first-person shooters like *Kingpin* have felt as though something is missing.

"We just scratched the surface of what's possible," Newell says. "Years from now, we'll look back and have trouble remembering what the excitement was all about. The current genre segmentation will probably seem irrelevant or even antithetical to the game designs of the future."

Ask Newell to look back, and he'll tell you that Warren Spector's *Ultima Underworld*, created at Origin in 1991, helped convince him that games would take over as an entertainment medium. *Underworld* was an inspiring precursor that eventually led to Newell's founding Valve. "Warren Spector is clearly thinking about an overall game experience," Newell says, "and drawing on different genre conventions in order to achieve that."

Spector, a longtime genre rule-breaker, now of Ion Storm, is responsible for *System Shock*, *Ultima Underworld*, and the forthcoming *Deus Ex*. Spector began as a pen-and-paper game designer, and lives for design. As he readily admits, "I can't write a line of code or create a single 3D object myself. Thinking about games and game systems how they work, why they don't — that's something I can do."

Does Spector think game genres are going away? Not as such. "I think there's something innately human in the need to categorize things," says Spector, "to fit them into neat little boxes."

But, like Newell, he adamantly defends the dictum that technology must be built around the game design. "Real advances in gaming, " says Spector, "are a result of creativity, not cool algorithms. Think about the games you find most memorable: did *Doom* and *Quake* succeed because John Carmack created a cool 3D engine? Or was it the adrenaline rush of a perfectly balanced weapon/enemy equation in an environment ideally designed for the conflict?" That mandate almost dictates the kind of multi-genre games that Spector has spent his life creating.

What about console?

So where's the console genre-blending innovation? Sure it can be

10 TOP Genre-busters to watch:

1. ***Deus Ex*** (PC)
2. ***C&C: Renegade*** (PC)
3. ***Diablo 2*** (PC)
4. ***Battlezone 2*** (PC)
5. ***Halo*** (PC)
6. ***Team Fortress 2*** (PC)
7. ***Good and Evil*** (PC)
8. ***Shenmue*** (Dreamcast)
9. ***Indiana Jones & the Infernal Machine*** (PC, PlayStation)
10. ***Zelda Gaiden*** (Nintendo 64)

"I think a player will find it immensely enjoyable," says Halo's Nathan Bitner, "to destroy an enemy command-and-control center in one part of the world, and have it affect the enemy's communication abilities in a part of the world that the player won't even reach until a later stage in the game. And when I destroy a base or even an enemy, I want it to stay destroyed, unless there's a damn good reason that it was rebuilt. This is just one aspect of the open, dynamic world that we want to introduce in *Halo*. This is the future"

HALO

argued that some certainly exists. The most notable examples of late include *Zelda*'s perfect blend of action and RPG, and *Metal Gear Solid VR Missions*' combination of puzzle elements and platform action. But by and large, console games lag behind PC games in genre blending. Some of it may be due to input — the simpler console pad dictates a simple interface — and perhaps simpler controls and games — but some of it may be demographics.

"It really all depends on how you define *genre*," says Greg Thomas, Sega's VP of Product Development. "Most 'genre-blending' games on the PC are simply adding significant depth and strategy to the games. This makes sense on the PC because the consumer is older and expects a game that challenges them intellectually, more so than on console."

But not all genre-blending needs to involve intensive strategy, does it? According to Black Ops President John Botti, there're other reasons more genre-blending doesn't happen on the consoles.

"It really comes down to design and budget," he explains. To change genres on consoles really requires changing gameplay mechanics and gameplay engines, he says. "It usually takes 12 to 14 months to create a title with one core game mechanic. If you start adding more gameplay types, even if they are derivative from the core game mechanic, you ultimately are upping the demand on resources and time. It takes more people, more time, to make a game which integrates multiple gameplay types."

Botti should know: Black Ops has tried to pack several genres — and gameplay styles — into one game with its forthcoming Bond

Name Your Game

We asked each person interviewed for this feature what kind of game they'd like the fairy godmother of game development to create for them. Something for enjoyment, that they wouldn't have time to create themselves. We limited them to the consumer technology available in the next three years, but without any real creative limits. This what they asked her to conjure up.

Greg Thomas,
VP of Product Development, Sega of America:
"First off, I would have to look very closely at the fairy godmother's credentials in game development, but assuming she is capable, I would have her create a social simulator RPG. Wow! A genre-blender! I think consumers would enjoy simply talking to other characters and trying to figure out what makes them tick. But that's just today's idea. Yesterday it was a remake of *Autoduel* from the Apple II, and tomorrow it could well be a magic-based action/adventure game."

Warren Spector,
Producer, *Deus Ex*, Ion Storm:
"Why, *Deus Ex*, of course! Seriously, though, I wouldn't ask my fairy godmother to conjure up a complete game — what would be the fun of that? I would ask her to wave her magic wand and tell me how to make a single-player game that makes me believe I'm interacting with real people... I want to be able to create characters who respond to the questions you want to ask and react to the comments you want to make. I want a game populated by characters who respond appropriately to your actions. And I want all of that without sacrificing one iota of your immersion in the gameworld. If there's a fairy godmother who can tell me how to do all that, well, send her my way!"

John Botti,
President, Black Ops Entertainment:

"I think genres will always exist, but we may find other ways of drawing the lines... It all comes down to consumers. Genres exist to tell consumers what type of product they are looking at and if they are generally interested in the experience" – Louis Castle, Westwood

title for PlayStation, *Tomorrow Never Dies*. Instead of blending several genres into one core gameplay element, Black Ops has taken the several-games-in-one approach. "We're shipping with exterior and interior third-person modes, skiing and driving," Botti says. "The skiing and driving sequences definitely add variety to on-foot action."

Still, Botti recognizes that not every team can pull this off. "Most publishers will not pony up the five million dollars required to have the resources on staff to do it right," he says, "especially if you're trying to focus on one sku. We had the opportunity to develop and explore multi-genre blending with Bond, because it's Bond. If we did an original title with multiple gameplay types that took this long, it would have been dead and buried long ago."

Given the PlayStation's level of technology, this may be the case. But with Dreamcast, Dolphin, PlayStation 2, and perhaps Microsoft's "X-Box," there may be more potential for designers to innovate, partly because these systems will first appeal to more sophisticated gamers.

"This is one of the reasons why we put a modem in the Dreamcast," says Thomas. "And in the future you will see the Dreamcast modem put to use in some genre-blending online gaming experiences."

With or without a modem, Botti also believes there will be more genre-blending on the new consoles. He feels the new hardware will bring with it new, multi-engine opportunities in game design.

"Imagine playing your own character in a highly-detailed world," says Botti, "where you're being chased down a street by a heavily-armed gang, and you must decide: Should I stay and get in a gunfight with my nine? Should I commandeer that guy's Harley across the street? Or should I head for the helicopter on the roof of the bank?"

Botti's hypothetical situation is an exciting one, and the potential for games that feature that level of complexity may be one reason PC developer Westwood is getting into the console race. "Westwood is working on next-generation titles," reveals Louis Castle, Westwood's vice president of Creative Development. "We haven't announced any titles yet, but we're certainly working very closely with the hardware manufacturers to deliver titles designed for specifically for the new machines."

But players won't need to wait until the new consoles are launched to see Westwood's next genre-bending creation. *Command and Conquer: Renegade*, a 3D action game set in the *C&C* universe, is scheduled for release this year for the PC. "*Renegade* is all about action," says Castle. "If you are great at other shooters, the strategy elements may take you by surprise. Overall it should be an environment that rewards multiple styles of play."

Another action title that has gamers everywhere curious is Bungie's *Halo*. While it, too, will primarily look like an action game, Producer Nathan Bitner explains that it will be much more than that. "We are always trying to expand upon the more typical genres," Bitner says, citing his past work on *Myth* and *Myth II*. "*Halo* will certainly draw on unconventional elements from other genres and have a story as compelling as any role-playing game. You won't be flipping switches or finding ammo in ancient pottery. The decisions players will make will be of a different order. Do you attack the tank and its crew or the communication station helping it operate? The choices you make will be strategic and tactical, and

■ **Developer Black Ops has implemented several gameplay styles in *Tomorrow Never Dies* for PlayStation, including skiing and driving sequences**

"I'd ask for the ultimate action/adventure game. A highly detailed world that blends cinematic storytelling, epic adventure, and addictive arcade play, including fighting, racing, and flying. It would also include an Internet component, to be a completely varied, persistent world that millions of people could play in."

Gabe Newell,
President, Valve:
"I can't wait to see what Shigeru Miyamoto does with the Dolphin and the *Mario* franchise, but I think there's a game out there that I think of as the "I'm a tiny person in a giant tree" game. What enables this design is the huge advances in polygon and fill-rate capabilities along with much better scalable rendering. Rather than being in a world that is very closed and claustrophobic, like the traditional shooter, you can go beyond the expansiveness of, say, a flight simulator, and have this really open, fractally complex space where you are always oriented within the world on a global level, but are discovering lots of cool local complexity. Think of it as a fairy having an adventure in a giant tree, where you see all of these branches way off in the distance, and you can travel there to find a colony of other fairies there who might teach you how to fly through this 3D maze. Or you could think of it as *Ringworld* with twisty bits. The thing is, with the new hardware that's coming out, we can build that kind of world and we never could before. That kind of world seems like a natural basis for adventuring experiences."

Louis Castle,
VP of Creative Development, Westwood:
"Whatever Miyamoto is working on, I would love to have it three years early! I expect that will be a game I play with my kids for hundreds of hours. He is the *Godfather* of game development."

"I can tell you I've been through hell," says *Deus Ex* Producer Warren Spector, "trying to explain to people just what kind of game *System Shock* was and what kind of game *Deus Ex* is going to be — are they action games or roleplaying games? We even argue about that within the *Deus Ex* team"

DEUS EX

each one will be exciting in and of itself."

Indeed, with the assistance of new technology, the scope of the game worlds developers are creating has grown considerably. Developers and publishers who intend to keep up will be needing to think three steps ahead.

"I feel," Bitner says, "that the industry is beginning to notice that many gamers appreciate having the best elements of several genres blended into one game." Still, Thomas doesn't think genre-blending is the only way toward innovation: "I believe there are lots of different ways to be creative and develop 'original' games, and genre-blending is only one. Traditional genres will always exist as long as game players enjoy playing them."

Moving Into The Future

If genre-blending is so compelling, why haven't we seen more of it, then? Botti says it's money, but Spector points to a deeper cause: "The biggest thing I see holding designers back is the lack of a common vocabulary for discussing game design."

Spector's right. He notes that in the technology arena, programmers share a common programming language. What's more, research on AI, physics, and 3D rendering is well documented and spans hundreds of man-years.

"They all rely upon terms with agreed-upon meanings," Spector says. "Think there's any agreement on what 'immersion' means or consensus on the significance of emergent behavior? Forget about it. Designers need to stop thinking of game design as a mysterious art that can't be discussed intelligently. They — *we* — need to begin applying the same rigor programmers and scientists (and even literary critics) have been applying to their fields for decades. When that happens, then you'll start to see some real design advances."

"I feel that the industry is beginning to notice that many gamers appreciate having the best elements of several genres blended into one game" – Nathan Bitner, Bungie

But when it comes to establishing a game that breaks traditional boundaries, taking a conservative approach to the creative process is something most publishers are very familiar with, and even Westwood is cautious when it comes to working with abstract designs.

"We temper our creativity with what has worked in the past," says Castle, "and try to sprinkle in new ideas within a familiar framework. This is very difficult, but not because it is hard to come up with new ideas. The difficulty is in holding back and not pushing the product so far out that the consumer feels lost or confused."

Consumer confusion goes a long way toward explaining why genres may evolve and blend, but may never die out entirely. "I'm sure traditional genres will die out as they evolve," he continues, "but I think genres will always exist — although we may find other ways of drawing the lines." Why? Because, quite simply, "genres exist to tell consumers what type of product they are looking at," he says, "and if they are generally interested in the experience."

But while genres may continue to exist in product descriptions on boxes and in magazines, the final word goes to Newell, who points out why genres belong on boxes, not design docs.

"Plot and character development and physics and great rendering are the tools for building the future generation of games," he says. "*Action* and *RPG* and *adventure* are ways of describing games from the past. The existing genre distinctions don't help designers come up with better games." **Next**Gen

■ **While *Bond* includes skiing and driving, the core gameplay is the on-foot action. Balancing all of these elements has added more than a year to the game's schedule**

Profile

■ SHIGERU MIYAMOTO

What's up with this crazy new system anyhow?

Dreamcast is out, and Sony has just revealed PlayStation 2. What about Nintendo? Aside from some impressive technology announcements, the company has been largely silent about its next-generation plans. So we sent Steve Kent to Nintendo's Kyoto HQ to get the latest details from Shigeru Miyamoto. Also sitting in on the meeting was Nintendo's number-two executive, Hiroshi Imanishi. What's up with Dolphin? Can Nintendo ever retake the number-one position in Japan? Who'll fill Mr. Yamauchi's shoes when he retires? Read on.

Dolphin Kong

Next Generation: First off, is Dolphin still the name of the project?
Shigeru Miyamoto: Yes. I am of the opinion that Dolphin can be the actual official name of the product, but some people disagree with me.

NG: What's the status of development right now? What do you think of the machine's progress?
SM: Right now, the hardware development team is asking if we, the software creators, have any extra desires to add into the hardware design. But I know that these people are the same who developed the N64. They have already learned quite a lot about what to do with 3D graphics generation and so forth, and they are full of new ideas. So rather than thinking about what we want the new machine to do, I'm concentrated more on thinking about what we should do with the new hardware.

NG: What do you mean?
SM: Like whether we should devote our energies into using the full capacity of the machine or whether we should say, "We've got a new machine with so much power, so rather than making every possible effort to take advantage of everything that's there, maybe we should concentrate on using just part of the power, but using it very effectively." This would let us spend less money and time and effort and still come up with better solutions and effects in comparison to what we are doing with N64.

NG: A very big rumor right now is that Dolphin will retail for $99. True?
Hiroshi Imanishi: The only place I have heard that is in **Next Generation**! In the interview article with Howard Lincoln, he just said it would be very aggressively priced. **Next Generation** was the one who speculated that it would be possible to do it at $99.
SM: Maybe if we leave out the DVD drive, then we can make it $99!

NG: Does a completed chipset exist yet?
HI: The basic design has already been made, but it's going to be next year before we are going to be complete. We're integrating a lot of functions onto just a few chips.

NG: Is there any possibility that you will make a year 2000 launch?
HI: Yes, but I think whether or not we can meet the 2000 deadline depends on what kind of games materialize.

The Games

NG: Has work begun on games yet?
SM: Yes, I am personally involved in a variety of projects.

NG: Anything you can tell us about?
SM: What I'm doing right now is making the foundations and environments for the development of several different projects. I understand that some users are already anticipating the next-generation system to be more gorgeous in terms of graphics and so forth, but I think that is only part of it. Rather, I think we should pay more attention to the very simple concept of how the new system should be played and what kind of play-rules are going to apply. Unfortunately, these are ideas that can be easily duplicated by others once they're revealed, so I'm not in position to say anything right now.

NG: You've said that when you created *Mario 64*, you created it the way people might create a theme park; that first you made, say, a snowy mountain, then you looked for activities players could do on it. Is that the kind of thing you're doing on Dolphin now?
SM: Yes, it's a kind of very consistent theme I always have, regardless of the advancement of the hardware technology. I like to seek for a particular theme. Of course, in order to realize it, to duplicate a part of nature, say, the machine needs a lot of power, and Dolphin is going to have a lot of power, so I think we can make something closer to my original concept. At the same time, because it's going to have the very powerful CPU, I'm paying attention to the possibility of exploring new aspects of usage. So, not just greater realizations of my original visions, but new visions of the CPU for other things.

NG: Sega is saying that the next evolution of games will be multiplayer, network games. Sony is kind of saying that the next change will be "emotion" in games. Where does Nintendo see the next step in games?
SM: I think the idea itself is going to be the next trend. They can talk about networks, but we all know about that, so what's new about it? It's not interesting. What's interesting is doing something which nobody is thinking about. That's why the work we do at Nintendo is so enjoyable. Without ideas, I don't think there is any point to making a next generation of hardware. And if I had some new idea, I may say tomorrow that we don't need Dolphin.

NG: Namco's *Soul Calibur* is, right now, probably the best-looking game ever made, and it's also turned out to be one of the best fighting games ever made. Do more polygons make a better game?
SM: Take a racing game, for example. If we make better background scenery, we the developers are very glad. So yes, we can make it better by adding the polygons. On the other hand, for the creators and for the game player, once they have seen enough of the more beautiful scenery, they get accustomed to it and see nothing very important about it. What's more important is what kind of information the players should get from those data. That's all. In making the games for N64, of course, we are trying to make better-looking games, but by doing so, we encounter a lot of technological hurdles. In fact, we are getting over them, but for the next-generation game machine we don't have to worry about a lot of hurdles. So I think it's going to be more easily done, I mean,

Still swimming with the Dolphin?

The idea itself is going to be the next trend. Without ideas, I don't think there is any point to making a next generation of hardware

better graphics in games can be easily done on the Dolphin.

Nintendo's Japanese plans

NG: Why didn't N64 do better in Japan?
SM: Yeah. I think there's got to be a lot of elements, including my way of doing many things and the way the salespeople have advertised the product in Japan. Mr. Yamauchi, for example, pointed out the fact that we missed two Christmas seasons against our competitors, and in my opinion we didn't have a good roleplaying game from the very beginning. In Japan, RPGs are a very big market, like maybe half of the total market. And we were late in introducing *Zelda* and late introducing other games. Also, at the time of the launch, 3D fighting games were very big, and we didn't have one. I don't know if those kind of trends were good for the Japanese market in general or not, but it is true that they were booming and Nintendo was against that kind of boom and tried to make its own boom.

NG: Can Nintendo have a 90% share of the market again ever? Will Dolphin do it?
HI: We are not concerned about recapturing the share for its own sake. What Mr. Miyamoto pointed out is we should be more interested in and make efforts to seek out new worlds that nobody is aware of right now. Then taking more share is inevitable, since we are creating a new market. If we are just concerned about recapturing the share [of the old market], we are just destined to repeat the failure of Sega. Mr. Yamauchi sometimes says, "Where does Sega look?" Sega is always looking at Nintendo, and Sega was just trying to capture the market share Nintendo already had. Mr. Yamauchi is always saying that if we are going to make a product, that product must have some meaning to its existence and that we are not making products to compete with some existing other things. Of course, when he sees other products are selling, we really want something that can sell like that product — I think that's the natural thought to have — but he's always saying that we have to have something with its own reason to exist.

When it comes to the N64 itself, I don't think it was a mistake to go ahead with cartridges, but the fact is PlayStation had a CD-ROM, and for many of the game developers the risk was less and the result was that we have to admit the variety of software was less than anticipated for N64. Well, when we introduce the Dolphin system, it's going to be DVD, and it's going to be a level playing field. The developers will have to carefully observe which system is more suited for development.

NG: Will Square come back?
HI: It's up to them, but maybe Square has been given so much preferred treatment by Sony that they won't feel like working for others.
SM: It's not which company is there, but which products. Nintendo is currently intensifying its development line.

The Next Yamauchi

NG: Hiroshi Yamauchi built Nintendo from a small card company into one of the world's leading entertainment companies, and he's been instrumental in running Nintendo on a day-to-day basis. Lately he's been talking about retirement. Will Mr. Yamauchi retire in the year 2000, or does he plan to go on?
HI: He is always saying that he cannot work until he dies and he needs some specific timing for the retirement, but he hasn't stated any specific date. A newspaper article suggested that it should be in 2000.

NG: But that's wasn't his idea?
HI: Not his idea.

NG: When he leaves, who will replace him? You? Mr. Arakawa?

HI: You know, I'm a kind of an assistant for Mr. Yamauchi, and Mr. Yamauchi doesn't speak about his successor at all, but common sense is it should be Mr. Arakawa.

NG: There have been several stories where Mr. Yamauchi has expressed dissatisfaction with Mr. Arakawa's work, although he seems to be doing a very good job with Nintendo 64.
HI: You know we all agree that Mr. Arakawa is the person who has built Nintendo of America to its current position — with great partners, of course. Surrounding himself with great people has been one of his greatest strengths. So, as for the criticism, I believe that being critical, is kind of a very Japanese, and very Yamauchi-like approach. In other words, Mr. Yamauchi is expecting quite an awful lot from Mr. Arakawa.

Rumor Quashing

NG: While we have you here, can we just clear some things up for the record?
SM: Of course.

NG: Everyone knows about your creation of *Donkey Kong*, *Mario*, and *Zelda*, but what about *Metroid*? What did you have to do with the creation of *Metroid*?
SM: On *Metroid* I had no involvement at all. Zero.

NG: That was Mr. Yokoi?
SM: Yes, some young people working for Mr. Yokoi.

NG: What about *Donkey Kong*? There's a persistent rumor in America that it was originally called *Monkey Kong*.
SM: No, we didn't have that kind of idea. I just thought the donkey was the animal, and donkey was considered to be very silly. NextGen

Finals

Some days it does pay to come to work — take a gander at some of the best-looking games ever to hit their respective platforms. Ah, the holidays will be good to us this year

Dreamcast

Soul Calibur 112
NFL Blitz 2000 114
King of Fighters 114
Blue Stinger 114
Ready 2 Rumble 115
Monaco GP 115
Trick Style 115

■ If you think the still shots look good, wait until you see the game in motion!

■ Positioning is the key to successful fighting. Kilik will be in bad shape if he ever lets Astaroth close in with that ax

■ There are lots of hidden characters and arenas to find, and you'll have to spend hours unlocking every last secret in the game

■ Dreamcast

Soul Calibur

■ Publisher: **Namco** ■ Developer: **Namco**

Namco delivers on Dreamcast

For a company that has never entered the consumer hardware business, Namco sure knows how to sell a system. Its PlayStation lineup (*Tekken* series, *Ridge Racer* series) has consistently dominated with some of the most technologically advanced and playable games on the system. Now, with *Soul Calibur* on Dreamcast, the wizards at Namco prove they're still in top form by creating one of the most beautiful and playable fighting games ever.

This is Namco's second attempt at a 3D weapons-based fighter. The prequel, *Soul Blade*, which came out in the arcade and on PlayStation, was lauded for having incredible graphics, but many felt that its gameplay was a little shallow. The main complaint was that the combo system required rote memorization of button strings and didn't allow for much variety in

The graphics are, simply put, the best we've ever seen in any home or arcade game to date

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The Rating System

Since we're living in a time when even average games are pretty good, we at **Next Generation** will continue to demand even better. Note that a three-star rating is a typical "good" game, so expect to see a lot of them.

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**
★★★★☆ **Excellent**
★★★☆☆ **Good**
★★☆☆☆ **Fair**
★☆☆☆☆ **Bad**

● Denotes a review of a Japanese product

the gameplay (much like *Killer Instinct*).

With *Soul Calibur*, the team has taken this criticism to heart and added far more moves than in the original game. Along with all of these new moves comes a new way of linking them together which allows improvisation and free-form combo-making. The result is a much more fluid fighting engine, which is closer to *Tekken* than to the first game.

Adding to the overall chaos of a good weapon fight is the ability to move in and out of the screen in 3D. Positioning is extremely important and you'll spend hours trying to master the spacing needs of each characters' strikes. Odds are, in fact, that without some serious devotion to the game, you won't be able to master even half of the ten initially selectable characters (not to mention the many secret ones) because of the differences in gameplay style. Kilik-players must learn to move around quickly and keep opponents at long range with his staff, while the brave few who try Astaroth must learn how to get the most out of his slow (yet extremely powerful) moves. The sheer variety and complexity of the fighters, combined with a great sense of overall balance, make this Namco's strongest fighting engine yet.

Of course, the main thing that will have people clamoring for this title are the graphics, which are, simply put, the best we've ever seen in any home or arcade game to date. Period. Characters are exquisitely detailed down to their hair blowing in the wind or the mist of breath on a cold winter's day. Their animations are equally impressive and casual passersby usually get instantly drawn in at first sight. No fighting game has ever looked or moved like this, and even Sega's great *VF3* falls below this new benchmark. Complementing the visuals is a spectacular orchestral soundtrack that urges players on in their battle to beat each other to a pulp.

■ There are plenty of moves, counters, and throws to satisfy any fighting fan

The icing on the cake is the sheer amount of secrets that Namco has included in the game. There are secret arenas, secret costumes, secret characters, secret modes, and over 300 pieces of artwork to find. Even for the single-player game, there's an excellent Story mode which has you lead your character on a quest to find the mysterious Soul Edge sword. Along the way, you must complete many challenges which vary in both style and difficulty.

Put everything together and you have the most compelling reason there has ever been to buy a new system. Hats off to Namco for showing the world what Dreamcast is capable of. Let's just hope that other developers can live up to this legacy.

— Blake Fischer

Bottom Line: Beautiful, deep, and far more compelling than any 3D fighter in recent memory, *Soul Calibur* is reason enough to own a Dreamcast.

NextGen ★★★★★

STREET FIGHTER II

The first and only fighting game that has really moved a significant amount of systems is *Street Fighter II* for SNES. Strangely, though, less than two years later, it was *Super Street Fighter II* on SNES which nearly bankrupted Capcom with its horrible sales numbers and high production run.

■ The ability to move in 3D easily (much more so than *Tekken*) adds a whole new layer of strategy to this already deep fighting game

NFL Blitz 2000

■ Platform: **Dreamcast** ■ Publisher: **Midway** ■ Developer: **Midway**

■ ***Blitz 2000*** **is arcade perfect, and adds a new icon passing mode — that doesn't make it perfect, though**

The beauty of Dreamcast's *NFL 2K* lies in the subtleties, and, while *NFL Blitz* might not be everything you want in a football game, it is anything but subtle. This first *Blitz* for Dreamcast is a comprehensive port with arcade-perfect graphics and sound, yet somehow the big hits and pulse-pounding action of arcade experience are diminished on the home console. The game's controls don't transition well to the Dreamcast controller, and if you use the analog stick, you'll miss plenty of tackles getting used to it.

To add longevity to the arcade version, there's an added one-player season mode with an extra page of offensive plays and some new defensive ones, as well as helpful icon passing. While the added offensive plays help, occasionally special team plays, like the field goal, replace the play selections you'd have rather called, like the bomb or Hail Mary. The new defenses aren't very well designed, and the game tends to fumble in season mode. Still, as a two-player game, *Blitz* holds up pretty well, and there's nothing more rewarding than completing the perfect last-minute fourth-down conversion. — *Tom Russo*

Bottom Line: As fast and fun as it ever was, but lacking the depth and one-player replayability of Sega's own *NFL 2K*.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

King of Fighters Dream Match '99

■ Platform: **Dreamcast** ■ Publisher: **SNK** ■ Developer: **SNK**

■ **Playing** ***King of Fighters*** **on Dreamcast is like riding a moped — it's kinda fun, but you'll feel stupid if your friends catch you doing it**

When compared to *Power Stone* or *Soul Calibur*, *King of Fighters Dream Match '99* looks like it belongs on a "classic collection" disc, and in many ways, it does. This 2D fighting series is as old as *Street Fighter*, although not quite as well put together. While *King of Fighters* spawned the team-battle premise, it has essentially failed to grow anything but its roster, which is, in a word, massive: there are 38 fighters, not counting hidden ones. Players can select from this huge list to form teams of three for team battles, or select one character for traditional tournament play. Of course, with this many characters, there's nice variety, but a lot of them are too similar, and they do sort of run together in your head.

And frankly, the game is an insult to Dreamcast's technology. The backgrounds are barely 3D, the 2D character animation is lacking, nor is the control all it could be. (We recommend the fighting stick). And, ugh, there's even some loading time. Despite all this, the series does retain the core gameplay and upbeat atmosphere that made it so likable on the NeoGeo, but it still fails to match. — *Tom Russo*

Bottom Line: Not bad, but with so many other high-quality fighters available, this one only makes sense for players nostalgic for old NeoGeo fighting games.

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

■ **Dreamcast**

Blue Stinger

■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **Climax Graphics/Activision**

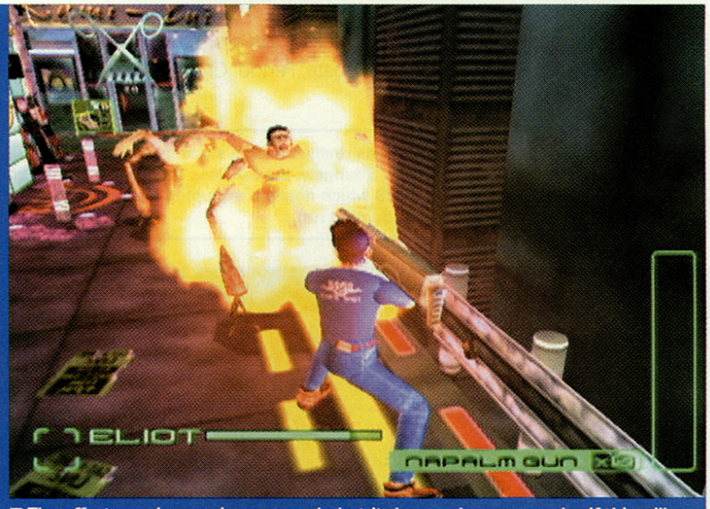
Things that go boom meet a lot of loose lips

There are a lot of fairly interesting things about this third-person action/adventure. There are also a lot of things that are really annoying — not as bad as the original Japanese version, but annoying all the same.

■ **Here's a freebie: the employee code for the Sega arcade is "1224" or 12-24. You're supposed to know this because this little girl mentions "Christmas Eve" — how's** ***that*** **for a thin clue?**

As with last year's *Tenchu*, Activision took some time to tweak this for its domestic release, and the effort is appreciated. The awful camera view of the original has been jettisoned in favor of a *Tomb Raider*-style, "follow you around" view. It still gets confusing in the game's many tight spaces, but it's no worse than usual.

The real trouble here is that some attention should have been given to the rest of the game's shortcomings. The dialogue is completely banal, and the lip synching is laughable: characters sit there moving their mouths while no sound comes out. This makes the otherwise competent voice acting seem stilted, with long, inappropriate silences. It isn't helped along by the vaguely creaky "find this object and open this area" adventure mechanics and sometimes *very* thin clues either.



■ **The effects are impressive eye candy, but it does make you wonder if this will seem so flashy in another year or so**

Still, the graphics are pretty and the weapons make some pretty big explosions. The design may not be inspired, but it's still oddly compulsive in the way adventures tend to be. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

Bottom Line: **Even the lowest-budgeted kung fu cheapie you can think of had better dubbing, but if you like an adventure with big explosions, this ain't too bad.**

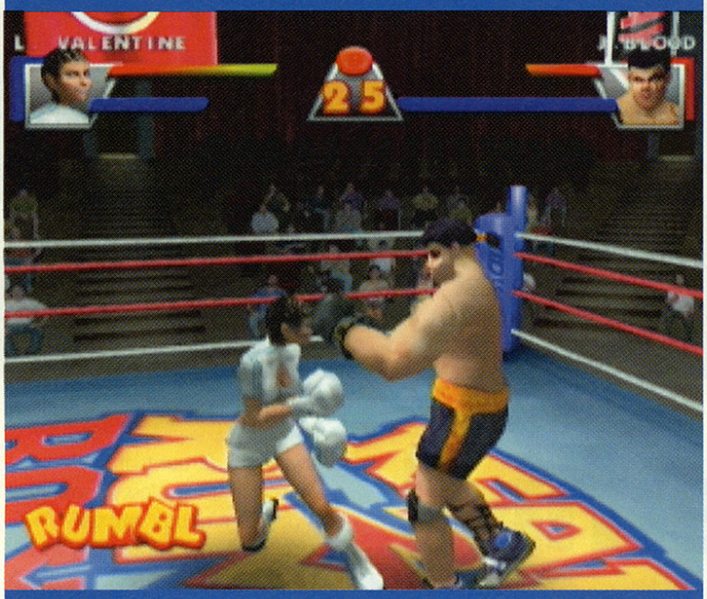
NextGen ★★★☆☆

■ Dreamcast

Ready 2 Rumble

■ Publisher: **Midway** ■ Developer: **Midway**

The king of arcade sports gets another jewel in its crown



■ **The characters are so well done, they're kind of creepy, especially when their eyes bug out**

Ready 2 Rumble has a lot of heritage to live up to: namely, *Blitz* and *NBA Jam*. Does it? In spades. Starting with Michael Buffort's trademarked phrase, the game kicks into the most fun arcade boxing game since *PunchOut!*.

This is the game that really started getting people in the US excited about Dreamcast, and for good reason. It looks great, with over-the-top, stereotypical (and slightly disturbing) cartoon characters like Boris Knockimov or Big Willy Johnson, and it plays great too, with fast and furious rock-'em-sock-'em action. Score six good hits and you can activate a R-U-M-B-L-E power-up. Rounding out the action are taunts and special moves that are unique to each character, from Butcher Brown's head butt to Jet Chin's kung-fu.

The Championship mode lets you run a gym and a stable of boxers whom you train via well done mini-games and club matches as you get ready to take your shot at the title — watching the crowd get bigger as you move closer and closer to the title is a very nice touch — but the real action is in the Versus mode.

Unfortunately, while the game is really easy to get into (which makes it ideal for introducing players to Dreamcast), it isn't all that deep — this is no *Soul Calibur* or *VF3*, and most players will tire of the one-player mode pretty fast. That said, the excellent two-player mode and fast pace of the game make this *the* party game of the Dreamcast launch line-up. — *Chris Charla*

Bottom line: With fast action, seriously funny character design, and excellent graphics, Midway once again proves it's untouchable when it comes to arcade sports.

NextGen ★★★★☆

■ **Characters' faces take damage during the fight, which can make for some gruesome victory poses**

Monaco GP

■ Platform: **Dreamcast** ■ Publisher: **Ubi Soft** ■ Developer: **Ubi Soft**

■ **A bit bland, but if you're willing to wade through the bad interface, there's some deep racing here**

While this game has all the options serious Grand Prix fans will want, you might have a hard time finding them: Ubi has used the high-res mode of Dreamcast to pack a ton of information on every screen, and unfortunately, the interface is among the worst we've seen on a console game. Count on being confused.

Once you get to racing, things are better. Although tracks are pretty sparse, the racing model is exacting — too exacting for some, probably. Even in arcade mode, count on your car spinning out a lot. While that's par for the course for serious sims, we expect arcade modes to be a little more forgiving. Still, the effects are impressive, particularly the way your tires pick up bits of whatever surface you're going over.

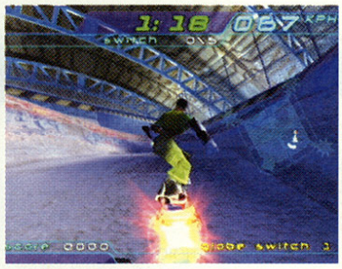
Overall though, the lack of the actual F1 license, the too-difficult arcade mode, and the confusing interface keep this squarely in the middle of the pack. — *Chris Charla*

Bottom Line: If you've got a Dreamcast and want GP racing, this isn't bad, but we'd much rather play Ubi's *Speed Devils* instead.

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

TrickStyle

■ Platform: **Dreamcast** ■ Publisher: **Acclaim** ■ Developer: **Criterion**



■ ***TrickStyle*'s complicated tracks can only be described as "brutal"**

Oh, what a disappointment this game has turned out to be. With smooth character modeling, exceptional physics and stunningly detailed environments, it seemed that *TrickStyle* was destined to be a stand-out launch title. But the proof is in the playability, and this game has two serious flaws: excruciatingly difficult track design and relentless AI racers.

Any minor miscalculation, and you'll go from first to last without a glimmer of hope of regaining the lead, while trying to navigate the brutally designed tracks, which seem designed for maximum visual appeal without much regard for how difficult they are to play. In order to unlock later tracks, you must finish first in every race, and even when you accomplish this feat, you aren't left with the sense that you could confidently repeat that performance.

Want help? Too bad. There's an NPC who leads you through four training missions, but sadly these will not prepare you for a day at the races, and documentation is sorely lacking when it comes to acquiring and pulling-off tricks beyond the basic maneuvers. — *Jeffrey Adam Young*

Bottom Line: *TrickStyle* is an impressive game to watch, and an infuriating game to play. Track design is sadistic, and AI players are inhumanly adept. Good mostly for increasing your stress level.

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

■ For once in a Nintendo game, the characters actually look like more or less normal adults — they were deliberately changed late in the design when the whole "videogames-kids-violence" brouhaha erupted again

■ Nintendo 64

Jet Force Gemini

■ Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **Rare**

Too much to do, too little to see

If sheer size had any effect on the popularity of a videogame, then *Jet Force Gemini* would be a shoo-in for hall-of-fame status. This lighthearted and pretty shooter is split into thirds, each section playable as one of the three protagonists: boy Juno, girl Vela, and their dog Lupus. Any one of these segments would be a complete game in its own right, but taken as a seamed-together whole, *Jet Force Gemini* is nothing short of gigantic.

And like a lengthy, bloated, Hollywood film, *Jet Force Gemini* loses entertainment value by exhausting gamers (and Rare's bag of tricks) long before the mega-journey is over. If this was half as long — and Rare had cut out all the tedious parts — it would have been twice as good. What could have been an enjoyable romp in the *Banjo-Kazooie* mold instead wears out its welcome and becomes drudgery.

For example, there's a mind-boggling array of 15 weapons, from proximity mines to homing missiles, in order to keep things fresh throughout the game. But, once you amass the entire arsenal, you end up with an unwieldy list that wastes valuable time as you shuffle through it — all while being fired upon.

Control is a cross between *Turok* and *GoldenEye*, but *Jet Force Gemini* underscores the problem of controlling first-person shooters on a console. Sure, we all learned how to use the scheme in *GoldenEye* because the game was good enough to warrant tackling the awkward inputs, but that doesn't make the setup any less annoying.

Without a doubt, any self-respecting gamer should buy this game to witness the result of Rare's Herculean effort. But don't even entertain the idea of completing the game unless you have the patience of a saint — and over twice as much time as it took to finish *Zelda*. — *Jeffrey Adam Young*

Bottom Line: *Jet Force Gemini* has everything a gamer wants and more. Too much more. Rare would have been better off leaving some of this on the cutting-room floor.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

■ It's all fairly pretty, but by now we can spot a Rare game by sight without even looking at the box or title screens — high-quality, colorful, and a bit bland

MORE LITTLE GAMES

In addition to a healthy helping of multiplayer options (including eight levels, over a dozen characters, and timed, survival, and frag-count contests), *Jet Force Gemini* features three hidden mini-games within the game. Two of these can be found by approaching the arcade machines in the arcade room. Classic race fans will recognize the inspiration for the overhead racing game: it looks suspiciously like *Super Sprint*. The second arcade machine plays a 3D hover-racing game along the lines of *Wipeout* or *F-Zero*.

Hot Wheels: Turbo Racing

■ Platform: **N64** ■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Stormfront Studios**

■ ***Hot Wheels* offers lots of air time and plastic tracks, but while the multiplayer is fun, its other charms aren't especially long lived**

Probably every kid in the industrialized world has had a couple of Hot Wheels cars at some time in their lives, and they've been practically begging for a videogame version since *Pole Position*. And here it is, complete with screaming cars, stunts, and plastic tracks.

Turbo Racing is a cyber version of what young boys have been doing with their die-cast cars since they escaped the crib: they make tracks out of household items and proceed to smash, jump, flip, and roll their vehicles until they're utterly broken. Clearly based on the *Beetle Adventure Racing* engine, *Hot Wheels* rewards the player for air time and stunts with turbo boosts. Turbos are a necessity to win, making extravagant stunt work a required skill. The best sense of speed is in the first-person mode, but landing some of the more disorienting stunts is only possible in the third-person view. Although one-player is a little rough (CPU cars seem to be able to drive anywhere with impunity and are constantly on your tail), the multiplayer and stunt modes have more to offer — they're both fun, if not deep. — *Doug Trueman*

Bottom Line: All in all, a fun title and a great party game, but perhaps a bit childish for hardcore racing fans.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Monster Truck Madness 64

■ Platform: **N64** ■ Publisher: **Rockstar** ■ Developer: **Edge of Reality**

■ **Miserable physics, shoddy track design, and smeary graphics make this a title to avoid**

Rockstar takes off-road racing to new extremes in its new title for N64, but it's not the kind of extreme anyone should have to pay to experience. A port of the PC title, *Monster Truck Madness 64* lets players slide behind the wheel of one of twenty famous monster trucks, from Bigfoot to Grave Digger to Hollywood Hogan, inviting you to crash through well-designed courses fraught with jumps, mudholes, hairpin turns, canyons, and tunnels.

You also get a bevy of power-ups like turbo boosts, missiles, shields, and a creative hover mode that can temporarily turn one's truck into a Harrier jet. The battle modes contain multiplayer games like hockey, soccer, and tag, and the king-of-the-hill-style Summit Rumble is brilliant in its simplicity.

Unfortunately, incredibly bad control hampers this title from the starting line. The trucks barely manage to turn even at low speeds, and the slightest bump, divot, or collision will send them flipping like a pancake. Driving in first-person mode is nearly impossible because the constant rollovers destroy any sense of orientation. — *Doug Trueman*

Bottom Line: If you want intense off-road gaming, play EA's *Beetle Adventure Racing* instead and run this title over with your car.

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Shadow Man

■ Platform: **N64** ■ Publisher: **Acclaim** ■ Developer: **Acclaim**

■ **With a little more work, this might have been a fun, different little game. As it is, it's just different**

Shadow Man is the tale of Michael LeRoi, an English graduate/dropout (the manual isn't sure which) turned mystical assassin who must prevent a coming apocalypse. A hybrid of *Tomb Raider* and *Quake*, *Shadow Man* leans more towards the dexterous maneuvering of Lara Croft than blatant rampaging, though a fair bit of shooting is required.

Many of Mike's/Shadow Man's weapons have substantial homing capabilities when fired blindly, which, oddly, removes any need for the included, trendy sniper mode. The control is loose to the point of frustration, with constantly missed jumps (and untimely deaths) while navigating the large 3D space. The gameplay is standard platform/shooter fare with a Caribbean folklore twist: players explore the real world and the supernatural Deadside retrieving Dark Souls, killing zombies, solving puzzles, avoiding traps, and gaining strength in both guns and voodoo weapons.

The developers were clearly enamored of the game's mythological roots and non-linear gameplay, and the complex storyline and environment could have earned *Shadow Man* a cult of its own. Unfortunately, though, the title feels rushed; additional time spent ironing out kinks would have earned it another star. — *Doug Trueman*

Bottom Line: Sadly, this is just a well-intentioned misfire.

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

WWF Attitude

■ Platform: **N64** ■ Publisher: **Acclaim Sports** ■ Developer: **Acclaim Sports**

■ ***Attitude* is flat, ugly, and not very entertaining, and not even the expansive create-a-wrestler mode can save the title**

The increasing popularity of professional wrestling has brought welcome competition to the games based on the sport. Acclaim's last game before it loses the WWF license, *Attitude* is the sequel to last year's *Warzone*.

This year's rehash offers a deeper create-a-wrestler mode, 40 different superstars to choose from, and the best wrestler intros to ever grace a home console, including authentic music, lighting, and special effects. The wrestlers look good, the announcers are passable, and the lighting is well done.

The problem? Just like *Warzone*, the wrestlers don't seem to interact with the environment in any believable manner, walking and wrestling like broken robots. Worst of all, the game's control scheme is still closer to that of a badly designed fighting game — up to five button pushes to perform a move just doesn't result in the right pacing for a wrestling match. Add to that the fact that wrestlers don't sell the moves, the voice samples are randomly placed and nonsensical, and the collision detection is still horrible, and you get a game that's very pretty but not much fun. — *Daniel Erickson*

Bottom Line: Worth a rental for WWF fans, but everyone else should just wait for THQ and EA to take their shots.

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

■ Thanks to a flawless control scheme, catching air and pulling off insane tricks has never been easier

■ You can pull tricks off of any surface you can find, giving the game a sense of complete freedom

■ PlayStation

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater

■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **Neversoft**

The best skateboarding game *ever*

With the number of snowboarding games we've seen in the past few years, it's surprising that there have only been a handful of skating games. In fact, since *720°* in the arcades, there hasn't been a skating game that has been any good — until now. *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* not only captures the feel of skating perfectly, but it combines excellent graphics, incredibly tight controls, and a great soundtrack into the most attractive package PlayStation owners are likely to see all year.

■ If you jump on the hood of a moving car, you can score big. If you don't jump, you eat asphalt — hard

The key to the game's brilliance is in its incredibly intuitive control scheme. Players can pull off tricks with the touch of a button, and linking tricks together is as simple as can be. Now, instead of becoming simplistic and boring, the timing on the moves is such that the challenge is in knowing which moves to link together at what times. As your skill level increases, you learn to link tricks into huge chains that yield higher scores. To keep players from merely repeating the same moves over and over, maximum points are only awarded the first time you do a certain string of moves.

Then add to all of this an accomplished graphics engine and some top-notch animation, and you have a game that novices and experts alike will play for hours on end. There are plenty of tracks to choose from, six different skaters, and a career mode that allows you to unlock secrets as you get better at each level. There's even a kick-ass two-player mode with several different subgames. Overall, there is plenty of meat here for anyone, and nothing has been left out.

— Blake Fischer

The Bottom Line: Whether you're a hardcore skater or just a wannabe, this will satisfy. A must-have for anyone with a PlayStation.

NextGen ★★★★★

YES, HE REALLY IS THE MAN

At the ripe old age of 31 with a professional career spanning almost two decades, Tony Hawk is practically an ancient among the roster of professional skateboarders, but if anyone thinks he's even remotely past it, no further proof was needed than his performance at the 1999 X Games in San Francisco. Although he only took home the bronze in the vert competition after a fall in the last round, he won Best Trick by pulling the world's first-ever 900° (that's two and a half times around, for the mathematically challenged), a feat unmatched in skateboarding history. And yes, you can pull off the 900° in the game.

Demolition Racer

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **Pitbull Syndicate**

■ **Don't let the good-looking screen shot fool you — this game is the pits, and plays like something from PlayStation's first generation**

Demolition Racer was developed by much of the same team as the original *Destruction Derby* from Psygnosis years ago, and it shows, in just about every way. Although this game has some "modern" enhancements like shortcuts (which seem sort of pasted in), the game mechanics might as well have been transplanted whole and bleeding from *Destruction Derby*.

Visually, the game looks every bit the latter-day PlayStation title, with detailed textures and a fair amount of variety. Other than that, it might as well be five years old. The cars control as if pivoting around the center, not as if they are actually responding to the wheels. You'll also notice that every other car on the track is exactly like yours. Apparently, this is how the designers managed to get 16 of them out there at once, but it completely negates any advantage in choosing one car over another — or motivation to earn locked cars.

Worst of all, the game is wildly inconsistent. Points are awarded by colliding with other cars, and in theory, the faster you hit one, the greater the points. It reality, it seems almost random: barely tapping a rear bumper in a turn causes an opponent to explode, while slamming into a totally stationary car on the next bend yields no score at all. The steering and control are likewise almost totally unpredictable, and — in a serious and unforgiveable bug — even the camera angle jumps around, from high-and-back to first-person for absolutely no reason. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

Bottom Line: Steer clear of this smoking wreck.

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Juggernaut

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Jaleco** ■ Developer: **Tonkinhouse**

■ **Like *Myst*, the puzzles in *Juggernaut* require some thought. Unlike *Myst*, the puzzles in *Juggernaut* don't require a hint book to solve**

Juggernaut is a game that most hardcore gamers should probably avoid. It lacks any action, and the graphics are merely passable. It favors thinking over reflexes, which is not always a bad thing, but it also lacks any sense of pace. The real point of interest is the story: as the main character, you have entered your girlfriend's mind, attempting to save her soul from the devil. If you fail, you will both be consigned to hell for eternity.

Actually, *Juggernaut*'s dubious spot in game history is to be (hopefully) the last of the *Myst* clones. And, as far as that goes, it does show a little evolution in this most deservedly reviled of genres, since unlike *Myst*, the puzzles in *Juggernaut* actually make a certain amount of sense. They aren't all easy, but they also aren't impossible. Nearly every puzzle in the game can be solved through a combination of in-game clues and basic common sense.

Interaction with the world is done via a cursor. On a standard screen, the cursor will reveal which directions you can move. If there is something to be seen, the cursor will switch to a "search" mode. Moving the cursor over an item activates a hot spot and moves the story along. This is about the farthest thing from innovative, but it works as well as any controller-based point-and-click interface we've come across. — *Adam Pavlacka*

Bottom Line: *Juggernaut* isn't anything new or especially exciting, just a solid entry in the point-and-click genre, with a better puzzle selection and more intriguing story than most.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Madden NFL 2000

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **EA Sports** ■ Developer: **EA Sports**

■ **The muted graphics of *Madden NFL 2000* make even the garish jerseys of the Tennessee Titans look dull and washed-out**

Madden is the workhorse of football videogames: he's seen the field perhaps one time too many, but remains solid and dependable. That said, this game presents you with a comprehensive set of options, modes, in-game tricks, control functions, and opportunities for both finesse and straight-up, grind-'em-out play. On offense, you can pull off a bit of sleight-of-hand by pushing the triangle button, selecting a wide receiver, and altering his pass route. In the intriguing "Madden Challenge" mode, you're rewarded with points (redeemable for special codes) for well-executed plays and football trivia answers.

But small problems mar the surface of *Madden*'s highway. Animations are mostly smooth, but there's some slowdown when the players pile up for a tackle. AI remains a sticking point — at times the computer-controlled player won't bother to attempt a three-point field-goal play when it's clearly in its best interests.

Perhaps the game's greatest handicap is its predictability. The same tricks that beat the game before are, more likely than not, apt to beat the game now. Want to roll to a touchdown, even on the game's All-Pro level? Try a quick series of two-step drop passes, or a rollout sideline pass. Want to score endless deflections on a computer-run defense? Quickly select the defender nearest to the pass and jump for dear life. Still, plowing up the middle with Eddie George or scrambling madly for safety with Vinny Testaverde is a satisfying way to kill some time. — *Greg Orlando*

Bottom Line: *Madden* loyalists will find more to love, but this franchise still plays second fiddle to *GameDay*.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

NFL GameDay 2000

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **989 Studios** ■ Developer: **989 Studios**

■ **There's actually starting to be something retro about the graphics here — like playing Genesis football in 1995**

GameDay is 989's premier franchise, and the 2000 edition continues that trend nicely. The best new feature is the potential for micro- and macro-management. You can take this game however you like it — as a quick-paced, eminently controllable football game; as something to dive into and select patterns for receivers and running backs; or as a way to play the manager scene, trading players, drafting, and signing up greedy free agents. It's even possible to import players from *NCAA Gamebreaker 2000*. Basically, every feature from last year is intact and improved.

Total control passing is still an intrinsic part of the game, and there are far more plays to choose from, so the on-field action has really opened up from this time last year. *Blitz* fans, who like the action but not the complexity, can also get a lot out of this, as there's an option to play in just one position.

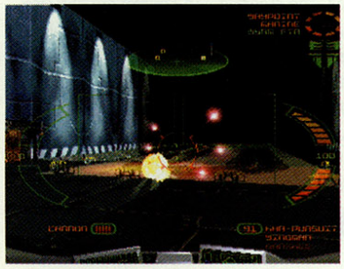
Animation has been stepped up a notch, and not just in appearance. Like Sega's *NFL 2K*, motion capture is context-sensitive, so a leg grab has a different effect than a high-charging tackle. Unfortunately, while this looks great for a PlayStation game, it pales next to Sega's effort — PlayStation is aging, and this shows it. Graphics usually don't matter, but if you have both, it's tough to go back to *GameDay* after *NFL 2K*, despite *GameDay*'s deeper feature set. Still, on PlayStation, there's nothing better. — *Frank O'Connor*

The Bottom Line: The top PlayStation football game gets deeper, but it ain't the best-looking football game in town anymore.

NextGen ★★★★☆

G-Police: Weapons of Justice

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Psygnosis** ■ Developer: **Psygnosis UK**



■ ***G-Police* is certainly pretty, but it doesn't play very well. In fact, it's a nigh-perfect example of style getting in the way of substance**

This second game in the *G-Police* series is still plagued by the problems that were apparent in the original, namely: draw distance, aircraft control, and weapons range. This time around, though, the weaknesses overshadow the strengths.

While the cinematic sequences show off some of the most stunning pre-rendered animation to date, in stark contrast are the ludicrously short draw-distances of skyscrapers when cruising through the partially populated cities of *G-Police: Weapons of Justice*. To ameliorate this problem, wire frames of distant buildings pop-up on your copter's windshield before the fleshed-out version appears. But, with dark skies, extremely sensitive steering controls, and fast enemy craft, you'll find yourself meeting many buildings — and sometimes even the road — head-on. To add to the confusion, you have wingmen and backup ground teams, and you'll need to master five different vehicles in the course of the game.

The 30 regular missions and 15 hidden missions are elaborately designed with plenty of surprises for maximum dramatic effect, but these get buried by control issues and the too-flashy, but ultimately confusing, visuals. Two things that you'll undoubtedly find frustrating in each mission: trying to find and follow your team, and trying to track an enemy aircraft as it quickly flies away and out-of-range. — *Jeffrey Adam Young*

Bottom Line: It seems *G-Police: Weapons of Justice* was designed to be a very complex and full game, but in the process, the designers forgot to make the game playable as well.

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Jet Moto 3

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **989 Studios** ■ Developer: **Pacific Coast Power and Light**

Jet Moto 3 is another title that has been usurped by the ever-expanding 989 Studios. The original game was a triumphant success that put the then-small, relatively unknown developer SingleTrac on the map. The sequel, though not as successful, took the series to new heights with more bikes, tracks, and air than Michael Jordan saw in his whole career.

Rest assured that racing aficionados and fans of the series will rejoice again once they get their hands on this title. Apparently having learned a lesson from its submarining of the lucrative *Twisted Metal* series, 989 Studios has more than made amends with *Jet Moto 3*. The developers have kept the same frenetic racing that made the first two titles popular and cleaned up the visuals, then added more magnetic grappling for shortcuts and hairpin turns. Perhaps most impressive of all, they maintained a fixed framerate despite multiple riders and dynamic lighting. Although the graphics do suffer from some pixilation and shearing, these minor flaws are easy to overlook given the wicked gameplay.

The camera sometimes wanders in the heat of a race, so practice and memorization of the tracks is a must, but players should be open-minded and always be on the lookout for shortcuts and ways to exploit their turbo charges. — *Doug Trueman*

Bottom Line: In a season with relatively few worthwhile PlayStation racing games, *Jet Moto 3* proves to be fast, furious racing fun.

■ **After a brief stumble with the second installment, *Jet Moto 3* is back on track**

NextGen ★★★★☆

NFL Xtreme 2

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **989 Studios** ■ Developer: **989 Studios**

Like the original *NFL Xtreme*, *NFL Xtreme 2* starts with a good premise. Take a few NFL stars, stick them on teams of five, and let them play smash-mouth football with huge hits and in-your-face celebrations. No rules. No referee. No penalties.

In other words, rip off *NFL Blitz*.

Unfortunately, the premise is about as cool as the game gets. Sure, there are some big hits, and the taunts flow freely, but *Blitz* did it better even the first time around, and *Xtreme*'s feeble humor only goes so far. Slapping real faces on the porky bodies doesn't help much, either.

Technically, there *is* some good stuff here — not much, mind you, but some. The framerate is up to 30 fps, and players zip across the field at a frantic pace. There's the usual stirring football music, and the on-field chatter, delivered by real players, can be amusing. But even the music and trash talk get repetitive after a spare hour or so, and the action doesn't last much beyond that.

This is because the biggest culprit is the playbook. You have ten seconds to find a play and call it, but the system is unwieldy, and you often wind up just calling the same formations over and over out of sheer frustration at being unable to pick anything else. — *John Lee*

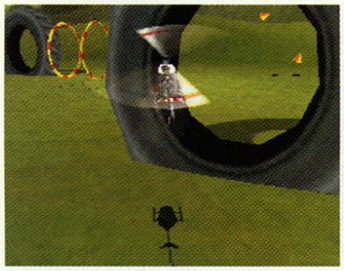
Bottom Line: Football purists will not be amused. *Blitz* fans will not be amused. In fact, unless you're looking for a simple diversion and don't mind an erratic playbook, neither will you.

■ **Big hits are the order of the day in *NFL Xtreme 2***

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

RC Stunt Copter

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Shiny** ■ Developer: **Titus**



■ **At $40, this is way cheaper than shelling out for a $1,000 model, and almost as much fun**

Originally previewed more than two years ago (it was featured in our Top 25 games to watch in **NG 11/97**), *RC Stunt Copter* was conceived by Shiny's Dave Perry as a game that would take two people (a programmer/mathematician and an artist) six months to finish. It's a little late, and the team grew a bit, but Perry's vision for the product has been realized perfectly.

RC Stunt Copter is an absolutely perfect simulation of a radio controlled model helicopter (which uses a controller almost identical to the dual analog, which the game really requires). Because actual RC copters are incredibly hard to fly, much of the fun and challenge of the game is simply in learning to control the copter itself. Since helicopters are fundamentally unstable, it's hard to get right, but you get better with every try: the perfect recipe for addiction.

And addictive the game is, with eight helicopters to fly and 30+ different *Pilot Wings*-style missions to fly them in. The two-player mode is ingenious, and if you've ever felt cheated by an ending movie, you won't this time.

The only problem we had was that most of the arenas were slightly too small. Other than that, this quirky title is well worth a place on your shelf (and in your PlayStation). — *Chris Charla*

Bottom Line:
A unique game with unique control, this game is a winner.

NextGen ★★★★☆

Star Wars: Episode I

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **LucasArts** ■ Developer: **Big Ape**

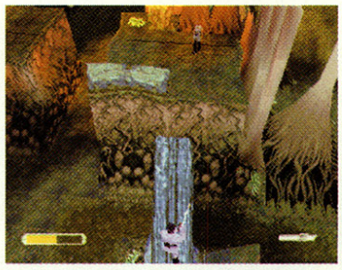
Have you ever felt "different"? Do you have fantastic reflexes beyond that of a normal person? Can you sense enemies around you that you cannot see? Do you have inhuman patience? If so, you may be a Jedi and therefore qualified to play *Star Wars: Episode I*.

It will be a hard life. One without reward. You find tasks that will try even the most dedicated of warriors. Enemies will attack you from off the screen, obscured by the top-down camera. Your Jedi jumping skill will be tested as well, because what is a platform game without the most inane of jumping puzzles to break up the action? Your only ally is the Force, and while your ability to use the Force push will come in handy, it cannot save you from the mediocrity pushed upon you.

Even your friends and allies will appear confused, and, even if they profess to be following you, be assured that they will get caught on all corners and other obstacles that litter their path. You will have to watch them closely because while they might not find any problems with walking into enemy fire, their death will weigh heavily on your soul and cause you to restart the mission.

Fear was Big Ape's ally with this one. Fear of the original idea, fear of fun, and fear of being technologically impressive. And, after many hours of death and re-loading, you will begin to fear that you have made a bad purchase. Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate, and hate leads to suffering. This game is the path to the Dark Side. — *Blake Fischer*

Bottom Line:
If you are not afraid, you will be. You will be.



■ **Meesa Jar Jar Binks. Need we say more?**

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Xena: Warrior Princess

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Universal Interactive**

■ ***Xena*** **manages that rarest of videogame feats: a game based on a license that's both a decent game *and* faithful to its source**

Xena is one of those licenses that ought to be a natural for a videogame, and thankfully, the developers at Universal did quite a nice job. It ain't perfect, true, but it's still a good showing.

The game looks terrific, with lush, colorful environments and quick, fluid character animation (although it's worth pointing out that the cut scene animation is pathetically bad). Some real thought went into the overall game design too, which neatly avoids the usual "run-jump-attack" grind with a number of action puzzles and creative ways of destroying enemies. And special kudos for how they handled the chakram — when you throw Xena's "round killing thing," the view switches to a chakram-cam so you can steer it to its target. It's a cool trick, and if it turns out that two-thirds of the puzzles are solved by tossing the chakram at something, that's actually staying true to the TV show itself, so no fault there.

There are some minor camera annoyances and the control isn't as snappy as it could be, but neither problem is especially bothersome except in tight spaces (although one set of frustrating levels, perhaps appropriately set in Hades, seem practically designed to point out these flaws). Also, you'd think they could come up with a better storyline than having Xena's gal pal Gabrielle kidnapped — twice. It's not only a videogame cliché, it doesn't even happen on the actual show much anymore. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

Bottom Line:
Solidly crafted, with a few nice touches and a thoughtful design, this one comes HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

NextGen ★★★★☆

Wipeout 3

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Psygnosis** ■ Developer: **Psygnosis**

It was probably inevitable that the *Wipeout* series would falter somewhere along the line, and lo, it's happened. It's still pretty good, as far as that goes, but likely both newcomers and fans will be disappointed.

The graphics have been tweaked to the point where the game is now clearer than ever, but the tracks themselves aren't anything you haven't seen before. In fact, they're considerably less, with a stripped-down simplicity that holds little of the attention to detail seen in previous games in the series. Why, in spite of this, the game slows down when there's more than one or two vehicles on screen is beyond us, although otherwise the series' trademark sense of speed is mostly in place. However, that hardly makes up for such otherwise uninspired design.

The difficulty level is all over the map too. True, this series is known for its one-player challenge, but this time first racing circuit is incredibly easy, while the second is nigh impossible to beat.

The game's interface, however, is about the worse we've ever seen, with utterly confusing menus and a murky, nearly unintelligible in-game HUD. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

Bottom Line:
It's not terrible, but for a series known for its "gee whiz" level of quality, this is a serious misstep.

■ **The latest *Wipeout* shows the series is moving into decline**

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Tail Concerto

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Atlus** ■ Developer: **Bandai**

■ **Chase evil kittens, catch evil kittens, toss evil kittens over your shoulder. And so it goes in *Tail Concerto*, a game that's almost impossible not to like**

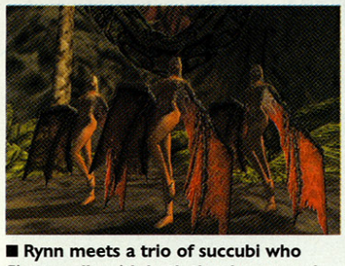
On the surface, this is an almost painfully typical 3D action/adventure aimed at kids, but bear with us for a second here. The bizarre premise (and no, we still don't know what the title means) is that an army of cat people is causing no end of trouble for a nation of dog people, so an intrepid, mecha-equipped doggy policeman has to fly from place to place in a dirigible, then run around a series of 3D environments while using the long, flexible arms of the mech to quite literally scoop up the evil kitties.

As you've probably guessed, whatever your age, on a weird, goofy level there is simply no way not to like this game. As its intended audience is doubtless aged ten and under, it's not especially challenging, nor is it technologically groundbreaking. But for adults with a sense of humor (or just under the influence of something), it does hold a certain irresistible charm and more than a few outright belly laughs. True, the fun is less in the gameplay than in everything going on around it, and the shine wears off well before the end, but it controls reasonably well, has an easy sense of pace, and from the moment you first charge into a group of superdeformed kitties and start tossing them over your shoulder, you get this big, silly grin on your face that just doesn't let go. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

Bottom Line:
Pick this up on the cheap, if possible, then gather some friends, get in the right frame of mind, and surprise them by throwing this in. You'll be a hit until at least the party is over, guaranteed.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

■ After waking the dragon, Arokh, and "soul bonding" with him, Rynn takes flight — and if you don't spend a the next solid minute with a goofy grin on your face while flying around, you're no gamer



■ Rynn meets a trio of succubi who flirt equally with both the dragon and her — just another odd little moment in a game full of them

■ PC

Drakan: Order of the Flame

■ Publisher: **Psygnosis** ■ Developer: **Surreal Software**

This beauty really flies

Every so often a game comes along that you just *know* is going to be great. From its earliest beta, *Drakan* has been on that list, and if it doesn't quite fulfill those high expectations, it's still a mighty fine game.

The faults, however few, are significant: while the environments are gorgeous, the characters never quite measure up to this standard. Though made of single mesh skins and detailed textures, they still could use a few dozen more polygons.

There are some minor problems with game balance as well. Enemies are unforgiving and Rynn's weapons never seem to do quite enough damage. Stealth is encouraged in the manual, but while there's a certain thrill in tip-toeing up behind a sleeping "wartog" and knifing it in the back, it's also less fun than an out-and-out brawl, y'know?

But these minor hitches only stand out because everything else is so damn good. The second you first take flight, the game gets its hooks in you and never lets go, and the third-person action is equally satisfying. If most of the puzzles aren't especially difficult to figure out, they're nicely varied and fairly clever in a few cases, and thanks to an in-game map that literally spells out what you need to do next, feeling lost isn't an option.

— Jeff Lundrigan

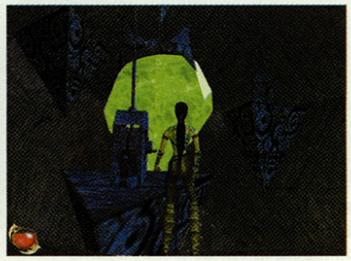
Bottom Line: It's not quite the end-all and be-all we'd hoped for, but this is still great, great stuff.

NextGen ★★★★☆

MULTIPLAYER

Drakan does include multiplayer online games — three of them, in fact — but you have to wonder why, other than as a bullet point on the box. Melee Deathmatch enables you, as Rynn, to run around with up to seven other Rynns in hand-to-hand slashfests. The Dragon Duel sets loose eight dragons to fly around and shoot breath weapons at each other. Last, Master of the Dragon has eight Rynns fighting over control of one Arokh. These are sort of fun in their way, for, oh, maybe an hour, then instantly forgettable.

Hey folks, this is an adventure game with action, not the other way around. Whatever the marketing department might tell you, not every game needs multiplayer options, OK?



■ Nefarious machines and dangerous underground chambers are just a few of the game's gorgeous environments

Civilization II: Test of Time

■ Platform: **PC** ■ Publisher: **MicroProse** ■ Developer: **Hasbro Interactive**

■ **Hey look, it's *Civ II*... again... oh goody...**

Is it possible to grow bone-weary of playing *Civilization II*?

True, it *is* a great game — it landed at number four in the "Top 50 games of all time" in **NG 50**, making it officially one of the best ever. And we'll be playing it for years. But how many permutations can we take before the yawns start rolling in?

And that's the strength — and weakness — of *Civilization II: Test of Time*. The classic game is still here, and some good strong side games are tucked in as well, including a science-fiction scenario that is somewhat reminiscent of Sid Meier's *Alpha Centauri*, and a couple of fantasy worlds full of sorcerers, witches, and wild beasts.

Yes, the characters change. In place of infantrymen, you summon hairy white beasts called Repellers. Stumbling into a nest of barbarians may bring on a pack of snarling wolves or a boneyard of warrior skeletons. Instead of camel caravans, you dispatch slug-like creatures called Arabbers. There are also Urdars, Typhoeuses, Salmagundies, Ophians, and so on and so on. But you still follow the same *Civ II* mechanics to cultivate and improve your universe.

And that's good. Really. And the game is lots of fun. Really. If only it weren't for those darned yawns. — *John Lee*

Bottom Line: Maybe it's time to say, "Okay, enough of a good thing. Bring on *Civilization III*."

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Darkstone

■ Platform: **PC** ■ Publisher: **G.O.D.** ■ Developer: **Delphine**

■ **Yes, it looks like something else, but *Darkstone* holds its own**

At first blush, it's easy to look at *Darkstone* and shrug, "Eh, *Diablo* clone." And, really, it's tough to overlook the similarities. However, dismissing it out of hand would be a mistake, because it's also tough to overlook the fact that it's a lot of fun, and it only takes about ten minutes before the differences between Blizzard's dungeon crawl and this one become apparent.

For one thing, *Darkstone* is completely in 3D, enabling you to zoom in and out and rotate the environment at will — it seems like a simple thing, but it makes a big difference. Second, you control two characters at a time, allowing for more varied strategies and a pretty smooth multiplayer setup. Last, the RPG elements are a lot stronger than in *Diablo*, as are the puzzle-solving elements, making advancing a character and getting through the story a bit more involved than just hacking through tons of critters. Still, that proves a bit of a double-edged sword, since keeping track of which NPC was asking for which item gets to be a pain as the game marches on, but it's never a huge distraction.

In fact, *Darkstone* does just about everything right. Heck, even the voice acting is pretty good. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

Bottom Line: An addictive little title that is, in some ways, even better than the trendsetter it closely resembles.

NextGen ★★★★☆

■ PC

Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun

■ Publisher: **Westwood** ■ Developer: **Westwood**

After all these years, the original RTS remains the same as it ever was

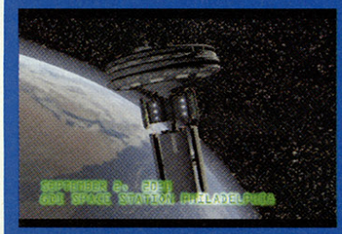
Waiting for *Tiberian Sun* has seemed interminable for *C&C*'s legions of fans, and now that Westwood's cash-cow is finally here, mixed feelings abound. The first thing fans of the series will notice is just how similar it looks to every other *C&C* title. The graphics, the intros, the menu bar — they're all there, they all look a little better than they used to. And that's all.

The biggest change that *Tiberian Sun* does bring to the series is more units. Both the NOD and GDI forces have been overhauled and have specialized units unique to each side. The GDI tend to focus their technology on air forces, while the NOD have taken to burrowing under the ground and using expensive cloaking devices to hide their entire bases. Unique troops, such as the mutant hijacker who can take over enemy vehicles and whose production is limited to one per side, make multiplayer now more of a strategic war than the previous games, which tended to encourage a build-up-and-rush technique.

But where are the great leaps forward in gameplay and technology that one would expect from years of work? Where are the earth-shattering graphics and genre-breaking realism? Not to be found here, unfortunately. This title still pales in comparison to the mighty *Starcraft*. — *Daniel Erickson*

Bottom Line: Westwood has fine tuned *Command & Conquer*, but that's not enough to please the RTS-crazed gaming public.

NextGen ★★★☆☆



■ **For all the money that was obviously put into the cut scenes, they still feel awfully cheese-coated**

■ **The little stripes under this guy mean he's a veteran. Keep him healed and he'll be worth a whole squad of newbies**

PC Finals

Gulf War: Operation Desert Hammer

■ Platform: **PC** ■ Publisher: **3DO** ■ Developer: **3DO**

For those who objected to the way Operation Desert Storm left international hoodlum Saddam Hussein still in power, 3DO offers a chance to go back and finish the job.

Gulf War: Operation Desert Hammer is an arcade-style 3D tank shooter set in the Persian Gulf a few years from now. Players take command of a prototype M12 tank — the "Hammer" — and blast their way through several desert locations (and by the way, ever notice how fond 3D programmers are of featureless sandy deserts? No need to draw in tiresome forests, complex urban areas, or detailed military structures).

It's an easy game to get into. Tanks move forward or backward via the arrow keys, turning is accomplished simply by aiming your weapon with the mouse, while right and left clicks fire the weapons. System requirements are modest enough for most low-end machines, even with the 3D engine. So, in a word, it's all very simple.

But it's not much fun. There's some entertaining play here, but it doesn't last long. The missions get monotonous. You drive around in 3D sand and blow up tanks and trucks and buildings. And that's about it. In fact, it's rare to find such an arcade-style action game on PC, and playing this shows why. — *John Lee*

Bottom Line: Saddam can relax. Sure, the troops are coming, and this time they may not stop short of Baghdad, but by the time they get there they'll be bored out of their skulls.

■ **You get some satisfying explosions in the *Gulf War* shooter, but not much else**

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Star Trek: Starfleet Command

■ Platform: **PC** ■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **Quicksilver**

■ **A Romulan frigate attacks a Federation ship (the horizontal bars show the remaining strength of the shields)**

After a whole catalog of *Star Trek* games gone bad, they're finally beginning to get it right (although given some of the other *Trek* titles on the way, we'll see how long that lasts).

Star Trek: Starfleet Command is a complex real-time strategy game with a steep learning curve, but it's eminently rewarding. Based on the rich play of the *Starfleet Battles* board game, it's stuffed with options. You get slow, deliberate starship naval combat, with flashes of high-speed terror that leave you gasping. You'll be drowning in buttons and menus, trying to make correct decisions even as enemy fire streaks toward you.

You can play as any of six races, some familiar (the Federation, Klingons, Romulans, the Gorn), a couple less recognizable (Hydrans, Lyrans), plus a few Orion pirates thrown in for good measure, which makes for a huge number of ships. Controls differ in color but fortunately fill much the same roles for each race, since learning new controls for each would be a killer.

Best of all, it looks and plays like *Star Trek* should. A solid 3D engine provides dozens of detailed ships, weapon tracks, and fiery explosions. Players receive rewards, promotions, and prestige points for doing well, opening access to more complicated missions, improved spacecraft, and other space-war staples. — *John Lee*

Bottom Line: Give us more power, Scotty. This one's a keeper.

NextGen ★★★★☆

Warhammer 40,000: Rites of War

■ Platform: **PC** ■ Publisher: **SSI** ■ Developer: **DreamForge**

Rites of War, the latest installment in the *Warhammer 40,000* series, will deck you out in the most colorful combat uniforms this side of Bozo the Clown.

You'll march through this turn-based strategy game wearing all the primary colors — red, yellow, blues, greens. If enemy forces don't see you coming, they'll surely hear your loud footsteps.

Maybe the colors and noisy marching are due to your alien nature. You don't play Space Marines this time around. You're part of the mighty Eldar, and you've come to a human world to reclaim artifacts and historical records, but the dumb humans misunderstand and start shooting. No problem. Just annihilate them.

Aliens and humans are nicely balanced, and they tangle on a hex-based battlefield, thanks to the *Panzer General II* engine. The game offers 24 missions, plus additional single and multiplayer scenarios, and an experience system adds some nice RPG elements. The longer you survive, the tougher you get.

There's some good play here, but there are also problems. Music is repetitious; replay value is low. Perhaps the biggest problem lies in the game's steep requirements. You'll need 64MB of RAM. If your machine can't live up to the expectations, you may as well prepare yourself for some painfully slow, hiccuppy movement. — *John Lee*

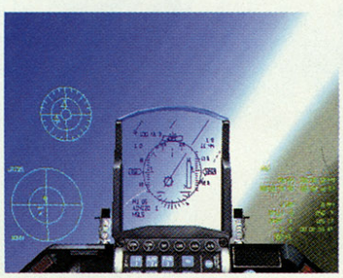
Bottom Line: If your PC has the muscle, you may enjoy this one for several days. Especially if you've got a good pair of sunglasses to mute the glare from those uniforms.

■ **Fantasy and *Panzer General II* combine to create colorful hex-based battle**

NextGen ★★★☆☆

F-16 Aggressor

■ Platform: **PC** ■ Publisher: **Bethesda Softworks** ■ Developer: **General Simulations Incorporated**



■ ***F-16 Aggressor* is an excellent simulation — it just isn't a very good game**

As a simulation, *F-16 Aggressor* is excellent. The F-16 is well modeled, and the fly-by-wire system handles nicely. The attention to detail included in the simulation is superb, with everything from weapons systems to g-forces properly modeled.

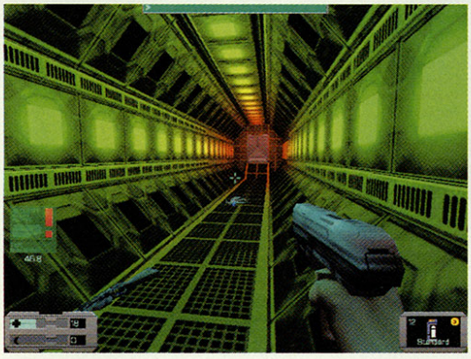
Where *F-16 Aggressor* begins to show its weaknesses is when you try to play it as a game. All the missions and "instant action" scenarios required by a modern sim are here, but playing through them feels more like work than a diversion. *F-16 Aggressor* focuses on modern combat, which means that long-distance engagements are not unusual. Traditional dog-fighting is rare, with a typical skirmish involving acquiring a missile lock and firing from a mile or so away, then moving on to the next target.

A single missile is more than enough to take out most targets, including your own plane. Mastering evasive techniques is necessary; otherwise skirmishes will be quite short.

Although a steep learning curve is par for the course in a combat flight sim (and *F-16*'s manual isn't even nearly the tome that, say, *Falcon 4.0* comes with), the realism still obscures any sense of fun. — *Adam Pavlacka*

Bottom line: *F-16 Aggressor* deserves high praise as a pure simulator. It accurately depicts the F-16, and it runs on an average system. If you want to train as a pilot, it's terrific. If you're looking for an enjoyable combat experience, however, look elsewhere.

NextGen ★★★☆☆



■ You've never seen a finer faster-than-light engine core, but the guards on the way there are a royal pain

■ Overwhelming? Actually the interface tucks away nicely at the press of a button

■ PC

System Shock 2

■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Looking Glass, Irrational Games**

Dark corridors, cybernetic ninjas, and thou

Just where does a design team begin when the assignment is to continue the retro-gaming legacy that is *System Shock*? Its atmospheric details combined with subtle RPG trappings have given it a reputation that only seems to grow by the year, especially as more games (like *Half-Life*) follow in its footsteps. Accepting this difficult task, Irrational Games has created its tribute to the forbear of modern first-person shooters — and if the resulting game has one fault, it would be that the recipe was followed a bit too closely.

You get around with a streamlined combination of the original interface and the Dark Engine previously praised in *Thief*. The press of a button switches from action mode, where the interface is functionally invisible, to an inventory mode where you can manage everything on the fly. In the course of the game, you collect cyber modules that provide you with credits for skill and attribute upgrades. Although this sounds like there's a lot of depth, the divisions aren't balanced enough for the creative player to stray far from the formula of upgrading hacking skills and strength.

Naturally, there are plenty of opportunities to put down moaning zombies and Borg-like service droids, and here the physics engine boasts its accuracy as wrenches clang together in hand-to-hand combat and thrown objects roll flatly to rest. If the pacing of the combat seems a little slow and deliberate, keep in mind that combat isn't strictly what this game is all about.

If there's one major complaint, it's that the low-color textures and angular level design haven't changed much from the original. Especially when compared to current standards (like, say, *Half-Life*), this is a considerable fault against the game's entertainment value. — *Buck DeFore*

■ Look, it's not going to help anybody if you lose your head

■ It's your job to keep the walls clean and free of biologically mutated mulch such as this, then hack into security to keep moving forward

Bottom Line: Bluntly put, *System Shock 2* is a welcome visit to the lost arts of the good old days, and an immersive experience as long as you don't mind some of the cobwebs that come along with it.

NextGen ★★★★☆

OUR STORY SO FAR

If you played the original, the sequel should be familiar: you're on the maiden voyage of the first faster-than-light starship when you awaken without any memory of the tragic murders and mutilations lying around you. On the journey, you gather audio logs that slowly piece together the source of your current dilemma. The plot stagnates in some spots, but it's a testament to the ageless qualities of the original that the vagaries of manmade artificial intelligence gone bad is still an intriguing concept that might even make you flinch a few times.

Gamer's Guide

Your nigh-comprehensive list of what's hot and what's not

Welcome to the Gamer's Guide, your insanely popular resource to what's worth buying and what's not even worth a glance. Each month, we update the list with every game we've reviewed since the last time, and cull out older stuff. Which older stuff? Well, mostly bad PC games, but a few first-generation console titles, too. We leave in just about every title that ever got ★★★★★ though, since they're almost always a good bet, no matter old they get. (Although it is worth taking note of which issue it was reviewed in, since time and technology march on, and a game that scored ★★★★ a couple of years ago might only score ★★★ today.)

Dreamcast

title	publisher	rating	#
Dynamite Deka 2	Sega (Japan)	★★★	09/99
Expendable	Rage (Japan)	★	09/99
Flag to Flag CART Racing	Sega	★★★	10/99
Frame Gride	From Software (Japan)	★★★	10/99
House of the Dead 2	Sega	★★	09/99
Hydro Thunder	Midway	★★★★	10/99
Mortal Kombat Gold	Midway	★★	10/99
Power Stone	Capcom	★★★★★	09/99
Sega Bass Fishing	Sega	★★★★	09/99
Sega Sports NFL 2K	Sega	★★★★	10/99
Sonic Adventure	Sega	★★★★	10/99
Tokyo Xtreme Racing	Crave	★★★	09/99

Nintendo 64

title	publisher	rating	#
1080° Snowboarding	Nintendo	★★★★★	42
A Bug's Life	Activision	★	09/99
Aero Fighters Assault	Video Systems Inc.	★★★	36
Aero Gauge	Ascii	★★★	39
All Star Baseball '99	Acclaim	★★★★	43
All Star Baseball 2000	Acclaim	★★★★	55
All Star Tennis '99	Ubi Soft	★	10/99
Automobili Lamborghini 64	Titus	★★	37
Banjo-Kazooie	Nintendo	★★★★	43
Battletanx	3DO	★★★★	51
Blast Corps	Nintendo	★★★★	31
Body Harvest	Midway	★★★★	48
Buck Bumble	Ubi Soft	★★★	48
Castlevania	Konami	★★★	51
Clay Fighter 63 1/3	Interplay	★★	36
Cruisin' USA	Nintendo	★	26
Cruisin' World	Midway	★★	48
Dark Rift	Vic Tokai	★★★	31
Deadly Arts	Konami	★	49
Diddy Kong Racing	Nintendo	★★★★	37
Doom 64	Williams	★★★	29
Duke Nukem 64	GT Interactive	★★★	37
Duke Nukem: Zero Hour	GT Interactive	★	09/99
Extreme-G	Acclaim	★★★★	37
F-Zero X	Nintendo	★★★★★	46
HF1 Pole Position 64	Ubi Soft	★★★	36
FIFA Road to the World Cup 64	Electronic Arts	★★★★	38
FIFA Soccer 64	Electronic Arts	★★	30
Fighter's Destiny	Ocean	★★★★	41
Forsaken	Acclaim	★★★	43
Glover	Hasbro Interactive	★★★	48
Goemon's Great Adventure	Konami	★★★	53
GoldenEye 007	Nintendo	★★★★★	34
GT 64	Infogrames	★	47
Hexen	GT Interactive	★★	32
International Superstar Soccer	Konami	★★★★★	32
International Superstar Soccer 98	Konami	★★★★	44
Ken Griffey Jr.'s Slugfest	Nintendo	★★★★	56
Killer Instinct Gold	Nintendo	★★	26
Mace: The Dark Age	Midway	★★	37
Madden 64	Electronic Arts	★★	37
Mario Kart 64	Nintendo	★★★	30
Mike Piazza's Strike Zone	GT Interactive	★	44
Mission: Impossible	Ocean	★★★	44
Monaco GP: Racing Simulation 2	Ubi Soft	★★★★	55
Mortal Kombat 4	Midway	★★★	44
Multi Racing Championship	Ocean	★★★★	33
Mystical Ninja	Konami	★★★	45
NBA Hangtime	Williams	★★	29
NBA in the Zone 64	Konami	★	41
NHL Breakaway 99	Acclaim	★★	50
Nightmare Creatures	Activision	★★★	50
Olympic Hockey '98	Midway	★	41
PilotWings 64	Nintendo	★★★★	21
QBC 64	Acclaim	★★★	37
Quake II	Activision	★★★★	10/99
Quake 64	Midway	★★★	41
Quest 64	THQ	★★★	43
Rampage World Tour	Midway	★★	41
Robotron 64	Crave Entertainment	★★★	39
Rush 2: Extreme Racing USA	Midway	★★★★	49
S.C.A.R.S.	Ubi Soft	★★★	50
San Francisco Rush	Midway Home	★★★★★	36
Shadowgate 64	Kemco	★★	10/99
Shadows of the Empire	Nintendo	★★	26
Snowboard Kids	Atlus Software	★★★	40
Space Station: Silicon Valley	Take 2	★★★★★	49
StarFox 64	Nintendo of America	★★★★	32
Star Wars Episode I Racer	Nintendo	★★★	55
Super Mario 64	Nintendo	★★★★★	21
Superman	Titus	★	10/99
Tetrisphere	Nintendo	★★★	35
Tonic Trouble	Ubi Soft	★★★	10/99
Top Gear Rally	Midway	★★★★	37
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter	Acclaim	★★★	28
Turok 2: Seeds of Evil	Acclaim	★★★★★	47
Vigilante 8	Interplay	★★★★	53
Virtual Chess 64	Titus	★★★	47
War Gods	Midway	★	31
WaveRace 64	Nintendo	★★★★★	25
Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey	Midway	★★★	29
Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey '98	Midway	★★	39
WCW/NWO Revenge	THQ	★★★★	48
Wetrix	Ocean	★★★	44
Wipeout 64	Psygnosis/Midway	★★★★	48
World Driver Championship	Midway	★★★★	09/99
Yoshi's Story	Nintendo	★★	41
Yuke Yuke Troublemakers	Enix	★★★	34
Zelda: Ocarina of Time	Nintendo	★★★★★	48

PlayStation

title	publisher	rating	#
3Xtreme	989 Studios	★	55
Abe's Oddysee	GT Interactive	★★★★	35
Ace Combat 2	Namco	★★★★	35
Akuji the Heartless	Eidos	★★★	52
Alexi Lalas International Soccer	Take 2	★★★	56
Alundra	Working Designs	★★★★	38
Ape Escape	SCEA	★★★★★	56
Apocalypse	Activision	★★	50
Area 51	Midway	★★	27
Armored Core	SCEA	★★★★	37
Armored Core: Project Phantasma	Ascii	★★★	48
Atari Collection One, The	Midway	★★★★	27
Auto Destruct	Electronic Arts	★★★	39
Azure Dreams	Konami	★★	44
BalliBlazer Champions	LucasArts	★★★	31
Batman and Robin	Acclaim	★★	47
Battlestations	Electronic Arts	★★	31
Beetle Adventure Racing	Electronic Arts	★★★★	53
Black Dawn	Virgin	★★★★	23
Blast Radius	Psygnosis	★	53
Blasto	SCEA	★★	42
Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain	Activision	★★★★	24
Bloody Roar	SCEA	★★★★	41
Bloody Roar 2	SCEA	★★★	56
Bogey Dead 6	SCEA	★★★	22
Bomberman Fantasy Racing	Atlus	★★★	52
BRAHMA Force	Jaleco	★★★	30
Brave Fencer Musashi	Square Electronic Arts	★★★	49
Bravo Air Race	THQ	★★★	34
Breath of Fire III	Capcom	★★★★	41
Broken Helix	Konami	★★★	32
Brunswick Circuit Pro Bowling	THQ	★★★★	48
Bubsy 3D	Accolade	★★	26
Bug Riders	GT Interactive	★★	37
Burning Road	Playmates	★★★	27
Bushido Blade	Sony	★★★★★	31
Bushido Blade 2	Square EA	★★★★★	49
Bust-A-Groove	989 Studios	★★★★	50
Bust-a-Move	Enix	★★★★	41
Bust-a-Move 2	Enix	★★★	55
Buster Bros Collection	Capcom	★★★	30
Cardinal SYN	SCEA	★★	43
Carnage Heart	SCEA	★★★★	28
Castlevania: Symphony of the Night	Konami	★★★★	36
Castrol Honda Superbike Racing	Electronic Arts	★★	09/99
Centipede	Hasbro/Atari	★★★	09/99
Championship Motocross	THQ	★★★★	10/99
Chocobo Racing	Square EA	★★	10/99
Circuit Breakers	Mindscape	★★★★	45
Civilization II	Activision	★★★★★	52
Clock Tower	Ascii	★★★★	37
Codename Tenka	Psygnosis	★★★	28
Colony Wars	Psygnosis	★★★★★	38
Contender	SCEA	★	52
Contra: Legacy of War	Konami	★★★	25
Cool Boarders	SCEA	★★★	27
Cool Boarders 2	SCEA	★★★	37
Courier Crisis	GT Interactive	★	37
Crash 2: Cortex Strikes Back	SCEA	★★★★	37
Crash Bandicoot	SCEA	★★★	23
Crash Bandicoot: Warped	SCEA	★★★	49
Croc: the Legend of the Gobbos	Fox Interactive	★★★	35
Croc 2	Fox Interactive	★★★★	56
Crow: City of Angels, The	Acclaim	★	30
Crusader: No Remorse	Origin	★★★★	29
Dark Forces	LucasArts	★★★	26
Dark Omen	Electronic Arts	★★★	43
Darklight Conflict	Electronic Arts	★★	34
Dead in the Water	ASC	★★	52
Dead or Alive	Tecmo	★★★★	37
Deathtrap Dungeon	Eidos	★	42
Deception	Tecmo	★★★	24
Descent Maximum	Interplay	★★★	29
Devil Dice	THQ	★★★★	47
Diablo	Electronic Arts	★★★★	42
Die Hard Trilogy	Fox Interactive	★★★★	23
Dino Crisis	Capcom	★★★★★	10/99
Disney's Hercules	Virgin Interactive	★★	34
Dragon Ball GT Final Bout	Bandai	★	39
Dragonseeds	Jaleco	★★	48
Driver	GT Interactive	★★★★	09/99
Dynasty Warriors	KOEI	★★★★	32
Duke Nukem: Time to Kill	GT Interactive	★★★★	48
Einhander	SCEA	★★★★	40
Ehrgeiz	Square EA	★★★	55
Fantastic 4	Acclaim	★	35
Felony 11-79	Ascii	★★★	34
FIFA '97	Electronic Arts	★	26
Fighting Force	Eidos	★★★	37
Final Doom	Williams	★★★	24
Final Fantasy Tactics	SCEA	★★★★	40
Final Fantasy VII	SCEA	★★★★★	34
Final Fantasy VIII	Square EA	★★★★	10/99
Formula 1	Psygnosis	★★★★★	24
Forsaken	Acclaim	★★★	43
Frank Thomas Baseball	Acclaim	★★	32
Frogger	Hasbro Interactive	★	37
G Darius	THQ	★★★	46
GameDay '97	Sony	★★★★★	27
Gex: Enter the Gecko	Crystal Dynamics	★★★	42
Ghost in the Shell	THQ	★★★	35
Goal Storm '97	Konami	★★★★	30
Granstream Saga	THQ	★★	44
Gran Turismo	SCEI	★★★★★	40
Grand Slam	Virgin	★★	31
Grand Theft Auto: London 1969	Rockstar	★★★	56
Grand Tour Racing '98	Activision	★★★	36
Guardian's Crusade	Activision	★★★★	52
Heart of Darkness	Interplay	★★	47
Herc's Adventures	LucasArts	★★★	35
Hot Shots Golf	SCE	★★★★	41
In the Zone 2	Konami	★★★★	26
In the Zone 99	Konami	★★	53
Independence Day	Fox	★★	29
Invasion from Beyond	GT Interactive	★	53
Jade Cocoon	Crave	★★	09/99
Jersey Devil	MegaToon	★★★	44
Jet Moto	SCEA	★★★★	27
Jet Moto 2	SCEA	★★★	37
Judge Dredd	Activision	★	42
Jumping Flash!	SCEA	★★★★★	08
Jumping Flash! 2	SCEA	★★★★	20
K-1 The Arena Fighters	THQ	★★	30
Kartia	Atlus	★★★★	45
Knockout Kings	EA Sports	★★	49
Konami Arcade Classics	Konami	★★★	09/99
League of Pain	Psygnosis	★★★	30
Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver	Crystal Dynamics	★★★★	10/99
Lode Runner	Natsume	★★★	39
Lost World: Jurassic Park, The	Electronic Arts	★★	34
Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete	Working Designs	★★★	55
Machine Hunter	MGM Interactive	★	34
Madden '97	EA Sports	★★★★	24
Madden '98	Electronic Arts	★★★	35
Madden '99	Electronic Arts	★★	47
March Madness '98	Electronic Arts	★★	42
MechWarrior 2	Activision	★★★★	31
Medievil	SCEA	★★★	48
Mega Man X 4	Capcom	★★★	36
MegaMan 8	Capcom	★★	29
MegaMan Legends	Capcom	★★★	47
Metal Gear Solid	Konami	★★★★★	48
Micro Machines V3	Midway	★★★★	39
Midway Collection 2, The	Midway	★★★★	38
MLB '99	SCEA	★★★★	46
MLB 2000	989 Studios	★★★	55
Monster Rancher	Tecmo	★★★★★	38
Mortal Kombat 4	Midway	★★	46
Mortal Kombat Mythologies	Midway	★	38
Moto Racer	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	36
Moto Racer 2	Electronic Arts	★★★★	48
Motor Toon Grand Prix	SCEA	★★★★	26
N2O	Fox	★★★	45
Nagano Winter Olympics 98	Konami	★★★	39
Namco Museum Volume 1	Namco	★★★★	21
Namco Museum Volume 2	Namco	★★	24
Namco Museum Volume 3	Namco	★★★	27
Nanotek Warrior	Virgin	★★★★	27
NASCAR 99	EA Sports	★★★★	49
NBA Jam Extreme	Acclaim	★★	28
NBA Live '97	Electronic Arts	★★	25
NBA Shoot Out '97	SCEA	★★★★	30
NCAA Football 99	Electronic Arts	★★★	48
NCAA Gamebreaker '98	SCEA	★★★★★	38
Need For Speed II	Electronic Arts	★★	32
Need For Speed III	Electronic Arts	★★★★	43
Newman/Haas Racing	Psygnosis	★★	41
NFL Blitz	Midway	★★★★	47
NFL GameDay '98	SCEA	★★★★★	35
NFL GameDay '99	989 Studios	★★★★★	47
NFL Xtreme	989 Sports	★★	46
NHL 99	EA Sports	★★	49
NHL Breakaway '98	Acclaim	★★★	37
NHL Face Off '97	SCEA	★★★★	25
NHL Face Off '98	SCEA	★★★	36
Nightmare Creatures	Activision	★★★	38
No One Can Stop Mr. Domino	Acclaim	★★★	51
Nuclear Strike	Electronic Arts	★★★	36
O.D.T – Escape Or Die Trying	Psygnosis	★	51
Olympic Soccer	U.S. Gold	★★★	21
Omega Boost	SCEA	★★	10/99
One	ASC Games	★★	39
Open Ice Challenge	Midway	★★	28

OverBlood	Electronic Arts	★★	31
Pandemonium	Electronic Arts	★★★	25
PaRappa the Rapper	SCEA	★★★★★	35
Parasite Eve	Square Electronic Arts	★★★	45
Peak Performance	Atlus	★★★	28
Perfect Weapon	ASC Games	★★	24
Persona	Atlus	★★★	27
PGA '98	Electronic Arts	★★★	36
Pitfall 3D	Activision	★★	42
Pocket Fighter	Capcom	★★★	45
Point Blank	Namco	★★★	40
Porsche Challenge	SCEA	★★★★	35
Power Move Wrestling	Activision	★★★	26
Powerboat Racing	VR Sports	★★	42
Poy Poy	Konami	★★★★	33
Pro Pinball	Interplay	★★★	26
Project Overkill	Konami	★★★★	23
Psybadek	Psygnosis	★	49
Punky Skunk	Jaleco	★	42
R-Type Delta	Agetec	★★★	09/99
Rage Racer	Namco	★★★	32
Rally Cross	Sony	★★★★	30
Rally Cross 2	989 Studios	★★★★	50
Rascal	Psygnosis	★★	43
ReBoot	EA	★★★	43
Re-Loaded	Interplay	★★	27
Rebel Assault 2	LucasArts	★★	26
Red Asphalt	Interplay	★★	37
Resident Evil	Capcom	★★★★★	17
Resident Evil 2	Capcom	★★★★★	39
Ridge Racer Type 4	Namco	★★★★	55
Rising Zan: Samurai Gunman	Agetec	★★	10/99
Risk	Hasbro	★★	45
Rival Schools: United by Fate	Capcom	★★★	48
Road Rash 3D	Electronic Arts	★★	46
Robotron X	Midway	★★★	27
Rogue Trip	GT Interactive	★★★	48
Rollcage	Psygnosis	★★★★	53
Rush Hour	Psygnosis	★★★	32
S.C.A.R.S.	Ubi Soft	★★	48
Saga Frontier	SCEA	★	43
Sentient	Psygnosis	★★★	30
Sentinel Returns	Psygnosis	★★	44
Shadow Madness	Crave	★★★	53
Shadow Master	Psygnosis	★	41
Shipwreckers!	Psygnosis	★★★	38
Silent Hill	Konami	★★★★★	52
SimCity 2000	Maxis	★★★	23
Skullmonkeys	EA	★★	40
Slam Scape	Viacom	★	26
Sled Storm	Electronic Arts	★★★★	10/99
Soul Blade	Namco	★★★★	28
Space Jam	Acclaim	★	27
Spawn: The Eternal	SCEA	★	38
Speed Racer	Jaleco	★★	42
Spider	BMG	★★★	28
Spyro	SCEA	★★★★	47
Star Ocean	SCEA	★★★	09/99
Star Wars: Masters of Teras Kasi	LucasArts	★★	38
Steel Reign	SCEA	★★	37
Street Fighter EX Plus Alpha	Capcom	★★★★	35
Street Fighter Zero 3	Capcom	★★★★	52
Suikoden	Konami	★★★★	25
Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo	Capcom	★★★★	29
Syphon Filter	989 Studios	★★★★	52
Syndicate Wars	Electronic Arts	★★★	34
Tail of the Sun	SCEA	★★★★	31
Tales of Destiny	Namco	★★★	48
Tarzan	Disney Interactive	★★	10/99
Team Losi RC Racer	Fox Interactive	★	47
Tekken 2	Namco	★★★★★	20
Tekken 3	Namco	★★★★★	42
Tenchu	Activision	★★★★	48
Ten Pin Alley	ASC Games	★★★★	27
Tennis Arena	Ubi Soft	★★	43
Test Drive 4	Accolade	★★	37
The Fifth Element	Activision	★★	50
Theme Hospital	EA	★★★★	43
Thunder Truck Rally	Psygnosis	★★★	33
Thunderforce V	Working Designs/Spaz	★★	46
TigerShark	GT Interactive	★★★	29
Time Crisis	Namco	★★★★	38
Tiny Tank	MGM Interactive	★★★★	50
TNN Hardcore 4X4	ASC	★★	26
Tobal No. 1	SCEA	★★★★	24
Tokyo Highway Battle	Jaleco	★★★	22
Tomb Raider II	Eidos	★★★★	37
Tomba	SCEA	★★★★	45
Trap Gunner	Atlus	★★★★	47
Triple Play '98	EA Canada	★★★★	31
Triple Play 2000	EA Sports	★★★★	55
Tunnel B1	Acclaim	★★★	25
Turbo Prop Racing	SCEA	★★★★	45
Twisted Metal 2	SCEA	★★★★	30
Twisted Metal 3	989 Studios	★	50
Uprising X	3DO	★★★★	50
Vandal Hearts	Konami	★★★★	29
Vigilante 8	Activision	★★★★	45
Virtual Pool	Interplay	★★★	27
VMX Racing	Playmates Interactive Ent.	★★	36
VR Baseball '99	Interplay	★★★	46
WarGames	MGM Interactive	★★★	46
Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat	Mindscape	★★★	28
Warzone 2100	Eidos	★★	56
WCW Nitro	THQ	★★★	38
WCW Vs The World	THQ	★★	30
WCW/NWO Thunder	THQ	★★★	52
Wild Arms	SCEA	★★★★	32
Wild 9	Interplay	★★★	49
Wing Commander IV	Electronic Arts	★★	31
Wipeout	Psygnosis	★★★★★	11
World Cup '98	EA Sports	★★★★	45
WWF Warzone	Acclaim	★★★	47
X Games Pro Boarder	Electronic Arts	★★	49
X-Men: Children of the Atom	Acclaim	★★	40
X-Men vs. Street Fighter	Capcom	★	45
Xenogears	Square Electronic Arts	★★★★★	49
Xevious 3D/G+	Namco	★★★	31

title	publisher	rating	#
Online			
Aliens Online	Kesmai	★★★	43
Command & Conquer: Sole Survivor	Westwood	★	41
Meridian 59: Revelation	3DO	★★★	37
Netstorm	Activision	★★★★	40
NetWAR	Headland	★★★	41
Sanctum: Oppositions	Digital Addiction	★★★★	09/99
Tanarus	Sony	★★★★	40
Ultima Online: The Second Age	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	51

title	publisher	rating	#
PC			
688(I) Hunter/Killer	Jane's Combat Simulations	★★★★	34
Addiction Pinball	MicroProse	★★★★	45
Age of Empires	Microsoft	★★★★	37
Air Warrior II	Interactive Magic	★★★★	31
Air Warrior III	Interactive Magic	★★★	40
Albion	Blue Byte	★★★★	23
Alien Earth	Playmates	★★★	42
Andretti Racing	Electronic Arts	★★★★	39
Armor Command	Ripcord Games	★★★	43
Army Men	3DO	★★★	44
Army Men II	3DO	★★★	53
Atlantis: The Lost Tales	Interplay	★★★	35
Baldur's Gate	Interplay	★★★★★	52
Battlespire	Bethesda	★★★	41
Battlezone	Activision	★★★★	42
Barrage	Activision	★★★	50
Betrayal in Antara	Sierra	★★★	34
Black Dahlia	Take 2 Interactive	★★	44
Blade Runner	Virgin	★★★★	39
Blood	GT Interactive	★★★★	33
Blood 2: The Chosen	GT Interactive	★★	50
Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain	Activision	★★	36
Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror	Virgin Interactive	★★★	36
Burnout Championship Drag Racing	Bethesda Softworks	★★★★	43
Carmageddon	SCI	★★★★	33
CART Precision Racing	Microsoft	★★★★	38
Castrol Honda Superbike	Intense Simulation	★	46
Circle of Blood	Virgin	★★★★	24
City of Lost Children, The	Psygnosis	★★	32
Civilization II	MicroProse	★★★★★	19
Civilization: Call to Power	Activision	★★	55
Comanche 3	NovaLogic	★★★	33
Command & Conquer	Virgin	★★★★★	12
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	Virgin	★★★★	25
Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines	Eidos Interactive	★★★★	49
Corsairs	Microids	★	10/99
Creatures	Mindscape	★★★★★	35
Curse of Monkey Island, The	LucasArts	★★★	39
Dark Earth	MicroProse	★★★	37
Dark Reign	Activision	★★★★	38
Dark Side of the Moon	SouthPeak Interactive	★★	51
Deadlock II	Cyberlore Studios	★★★	43
Deathkarz	GT Interactive	★★★★	49
Delta Force	NovaLogic	★★★	51
Descent 3	Interplay	★★★★★	56
Descent Freespace	Interplay	★★★★	45
Descent to Undermountain	Interplay	★	41
Diablo	Blizzard	★★★★	28
Die by the Sword	Interplay	★★★★★	42
Discworld II: Mortality Bytes!	Psygnosis	★★★	32
Dominant Species	Red Storm	★★	49
Dominion: Storm Over Gift 3	Eidos	★★	46
Dragon Dice	Interplay	★	35
Dungeon Keeper	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	33
Dungeon Keeper 2	Electronic Arts	★★★	10/99
Dune 2000	Westwood	★★	48
Ecstatica 2	Psygnosis	★★★★	30
EF2000 v2.0	Ocean of America, Inc.	★★★★	36
Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall, The	Bethesda Softworks	★★★★★	24
Emergency: Fighters for Life	WizardWorks	★★	48
Emperor of the Fading Suns	SegaSoft	★★★★	32
Excalibur 2055 A.D.	Sir Tech	★★	37
Expendable	Rage Software	★★	56
Extreme Assault	Blue Byte	★★	35
Extreme Tactics	Piranha Interactive	★★★	46
F-15	EA	★★★★	43
F1 Racing Simulation	Ubi Soft	★★★★	39
Fable	Sir-tech	★★★	31
Faery Tale Adventure II	Encore Software	★★	40
Fallen Haven	Interactive Magic	★★	32
Fallout	Interplay	★★★★	38
Fallout 2	Interplay	★★★★	50
Flesh Feast	SegaSoft	★★★	45
Forsaken	Acclaim	★★★	44
Gangsters	Eidos Interactive	★★★★	51
Game, Net & Match	Blue Byte	★★★	45
Get Medieval	Monolith	★★★	48
G.Police	Psygnosis	★★★★	38
Grand Prix Legends	Sierra Sports	★★★★★	49
Grand Theft Auto	Take 2	★★★★	42
Grim Fandango	LucasArts	★★★★★	50
Half-Life	Sierra	★★★★★	50
Heavy Gear	Activision	★★★	39
Heavy Gear II	Activision	★★★★★	10/99
Heretic II	Activision	★★★	51
Hexplore	Infogrames	★★★	49
Icarus: Sanctuary of the Gods	JC Research	★★★	48
iF-22 Raptor	Interactive Magic	★★★	35
Imperialism II	Strategic Simulations	★★★★	56
Imperium Galactica	GT Interactive	★★★★	33
Incoming	Rage Software	★★★★	46
Industry Giant	Interactive Magic	★★★★	45
Interstate '76	Activision	★★★★	31
Into the Void	Playmates	★★★	33
Isle of Four Winds: Rune War, The	Arcanium Productions	★★★	39
Jane's Fleet Command	Jane's Combat Simulations	★★★★	56
Jazz Jackrabbit 2	G.O.D.	★	45
Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II	LucasArts	★★★★★	36
Jedi Knight: Mysteries of the Sith	LucasArts	★★★★	41
Jeff Gordon XS Racing	ASC Games	★★	09/99
Jetfighter III	Interplay	★★★★	29
John Saul's Blackstone Chronicles	Mindscape	★★★	51
Journeyman Project 3	Red Orb	★★★★	41
Kingpin: Life of Crime	Interplay	★★★★	10/99
King's Quest: Mask of Eternity	Sierra	★★★	51
Knights and Merchants	Interactive Magic	★★★★	49
Lands of Lore: Guardians of Destiny	Westwood Studio	★★★	37
Last Bronx	Sega	★★	43
Last Express, The	Broderbund	★★★★	31
Lords of the Realm II	Sierra	★★★★	28
M.A.X.	Interplay	★★★★	30
M.A.X. 2	Interplay	★★★★	47
M1A2 Abrams	Interactive Magic	★★★	32
M1 Tank Platoon II	MicroProse	★★★★	43
Machines	Acclaim	★★★	55
Mageslayer	GT Interactive	★★★★	37
Magic: The Gathering	Spectrum Holobyte	★★	31
Master of Orion II	MicroProse	★★★	28
MDK	Playmates	★★★★	31
Meat Puppet	Playmates Interactive	★★★	34
MechCommander	MicroProse	★★★	46
MechWarrior 2	Activision	★★★★	10
MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries	Activision	★★★★	25
MechWarrior 3	MicroProse	★★★★	09/99
Midtown Madness	Microsoft	★★★★	56
Might and Magic VI	3DO Company	★★★★	44
Might & Magic VII	3DO	★★★	09/99
Monster Truck Madness	Microsoft	★★★★	26
Monster Truck Madness 2	Microsoft	★★★	44
Montezuma's Return	Wizardworks	★★	50
Moto Racer GP	BMG	★★★★★	31
Myth	Bungie	★★★★	38
Myth II: Soulblighter	Bungie	★★★★	53
Nam	GT Interactive	★	47
NASCAR Racing 2	Sierra On-Line	★★★	40
Need for Speed III: Hot Pursuit	Electronic Arts	★★★★	48
Need for Speed: High Stakes	Electronic Arts	★★★★	09/99
NHL 99	EA Sports	★★★★★	50
Of Light and Darkness	Interplay	★★	43
Official Formula 1 Racing	Eidos	★★	10/99
Outlaws	LucasArts	★★★	32
Outwars	Microsoft	★	43
Panzer Commander	SSI	★★★★	46
Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain	THQ	★★	37
The People's General	SSI	★★★	50
Plane Crazy	SegaSoft	★★	48
Pod	Ubi Soft	★★★	31
Postal	Ripcord	★★★★	37
Powerslave	Playmates	★★	30
Privateer 2: The Darkening	Origin/EA	★★★★	29
Quake	Id Software	★★★★★	22
Quake 2	Activision	★★★★	39
Railroad Tycoon II	Gathering of Developers	★★★★	50
Rainbow 6	Red Storm	★★★★	47
RAMA	Sierra	★★	26
Re-Volt	Acclaim	★★★★	10/99
Realms of Arkania III: Shadows Over Riva	Sir-Tech	★★★★	33
Realms of the Haunting	Interplay	★★★★	30
Rebellion	LucasArts	★★	43
Recoil	Electronic Arts	★★★	55
Red Baron II	Sierra	★★★	40
Red Baron 3D	Sierra	★★★★	50
Redguard	Bethesda Softworks	★★★★	50
Redjack	THQ	★★★	45
Redline Racer	Ubi Soft	★★★	47
Redneck Rampage	Interplay	★★★	32
Redneck Rampage Rides Again	Interplay	★★★	45
Return to Krondor	Sierra	★★★	52
Revenge of the Arcade	Microsoft	★	48
Rich Diamond	Core Concepts	★★	56
Ring	Red Orb	★	10/99
Riven	Red Orb	★★★	38
Rocket Jockey	SegaSoft	★★★★	27
Rocky Mountain Trophy Hunter	WizardWorks	★★	44
Sabre Ace: Conflict Over Korea	Virgin Interactive	★★★	38
Sanitarium	ASC	★★★★	44
Scarab	Electronic Arts	★★★	30
Sega Rally	Sega	★★★	30
Sega Touring Car Championship	Sega	★★	42
Sentient	Psygnosis	★★	33
Settlers III	Blue Byte	★★	53
Shivers 2: Harvest of Souls	Sierra On-Line	★★	32
Shogo: Mobile Armor	Monolith	★★★★	50
Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	52
Sid Meier's Gettysburg	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	37
SimCity 3000	Electronic Arts	★★★★	53
Sin	Activision	★★★★	50
South Park	Acclaim	★★★	51
Space Bar, The	Boffo Games	★★★★	33
Space Bunnies Must Die	Ripcord	★★★	50
Spec Ops	Ripcord	★★★★	43
Star Command Revolution	GT Interactive	★★	31
Star Trek: Birth of the Federation	Hasbro Interactive	★★	09/99
Star Trek Pinball	Interplay	★	43
Star Wars Episode I	LucasArts	★★★	09/99
Star Wars: Rogue Squadron	LucasArts Interactive	★★★★	51
StarCraft	Cendant	★★★★★	43
Starfleet Academy	Interplay	★★★	36
Starsiege: Tribes	Sierra	★★★★★	51
Starship Titanic	Simon & Schuster	★★★★	43
Streets of Sim City	Maxis	★	40
Sub Culture	Ubi Soft	★★★★	37
Swarm	Reflex Entertainment	★★	44
Temujin	SouthPeak Interactive	★★★	38
Terminator: SkyNET	Bethesda Softworks	★★★★★	26
Test Drive Off Road	Accolade	★★	31
Tex Murphy: Overseer	Access	★★	42
Theme Hospital	Bullfrog/Origin	★★★★	31
Thief	Eidos interactive	★★★★	52
Tiger Woods Golf '99	EA Sports	★★★	48
Tomb Raider Gold	Eidos Interactive	★★★	43
Tomb Raider III	Eidos Interactive	★★★★	49
Total Annihilation	GT Interactive	★★★★	36
Total Annihilation: Kingdoms	GT Interactive	★★★	10/99
Trespasser	Dreamworks Interactive	★★	50
Twinsen's Odyssey	Activision	★★★★	34
Ultimate 8 Ball	THQ	★★★★	56
Ultimate Race Pro	MicroProse	★★★★	43
Unreal	GT Interactive	★★★★★	44
Unreal Tournament	GT Interactive	★★★★	09/99
Uprising	Cyclone Studios	★★★★★	37
Urban Assault	Microsoft Games	★★★	49
Uprising 2: Lead and Destroy	3DO	★★★★	51
Vangers	Buka Entertainment	★★★	46
Virtual Pool 2	Interplay	★★★★★	38
Virus	Sirtech	★★	40
VR Baseball 2000	VR Sports	★★★	49
Wages of War	3DO	★★	28
WarCraft 2: Tides of Darkness	Blizzard Entertainment	★★★★★	15
WarGames	MGM Interactive	★★★	46
Wargasm	Infogrames	★★	52
Warhammer 40,000: Chaos Gate	SSI	★★★	51
Warlords III: Darklords Rising	Red Orb	★★★★	47
Warlords III: Reign of Heroes	Red Orb	★★★	35
Warzone 2100	Eidos	★★★★	55
Wing Commander Prophecy	Electronic Arts	★★★★	40
Wipeout XL	Psygnosis	★★★★	33
X-COM: Apocalypse	MicroProse	★★★	35
X-COM: Interceptor	MicroProse	★★★	46
X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter	LucasArts	★★★	32
XCar: Experimental Racing	Bethesda Softworks	★★★	35
Zork: Grand Inquisitor	Activision	★★★★	39

Letters

The corresponding strengths of the **Next Gen** reader

During the early issues of your magazine, I found it quite refreshing that you tried to be as unbiased as possible and that you usually weren't heavily influenced by all the hype coming out of the industry. However, in your most recent issue, you spoke with a few if not many of the developers for PSX2 at Sony's developers conference. At the end of the article, one could surmise — as you did — that the PSX2 will be a nightmare to make games for. You then went on, however, to try and put a positive spin on what seems to be the PSX2's major Achilles' heel. Why? The Sega Saturn was a nightmare to develop for and developers voiced their disposition by making games for systems that didn't require as much effort. Even the N64 was slightly criticized for being harder to develop for than the PSX, which at the time was undoubtedly the easiest system to develop for. If the PSX2 will be difficult to program for, then I would expect your magazine to point out that flaw with the same consistency as you did with the N64 and Saturn.

QJ2hearts@aol.com

There's a fundamental difference between Saturn and PlayStation 2. Saturn took incredible efforts to deliver merely OK, PlayStation-level results, but the same incredible effort on PlayStation 2 will deliver results that have simply never been seen before. Everyone we've spoken to says that if you're not willing to make the effort on PlayStation 2, you can still achieve Dreamcast-like results, but the extra effort will pay off tremendously. That accounts for the difference in programmer attitudes. On Saturn, it was "Oh, I have to do all this work to do the same thing the PlayStation guy does in an afternoon," but on PlayStation 2, it's "Wow, if I do all this work, I can do things no one's ever seen before." We accurately reported the attitude of programmers we spoke to who attended the conference. That said, we noted in a news story last month that some publishers are starting to balk at the development costs for PlayStation 2, figuring they can do better with lower-cost games for Dreamcast than by making the PlayStation 2 effort.

I strongly think that you should mention important info about the games that you review. First of all, you should mention the difficulty of the game — whether easy, medium, hard, or extremely difficult. You could also put the number of hours it will take to complete by the average gamer. Last but not least, the price of the game. I think that these suggestions will make reviews even more comprehensive than they already are.

Michael A. Haddad
Articun144@aol.com

Unfortunately, the difference in skill levels among gamers makes trying to nail down the difficulty impossible — what's easy for us may be impossible for others. Ditto with play time. There was a recent incident at Imagine where the reviewer for Kain *at one magazine took two hours to get through a part that took another reviewer 15 minutes. We do mention if a game is especially easy or difficult, or short or long, but trying to codify length and difficulty is impossible. As for price, most games are $39–$49, so we don't feel it's worth the space to keep repeating the same price in every review.*

I'm starting to have second thoughts about the launch of the PlayStation 2 now. I've just read on your web site that the final machine is going to be launched in January in Japan for $400! That price is just ri-goddamn-diculous! Why would anyone but the extreme Sony fan buy this machine when they could get a Dreamcast for 200 bucks? In my opinion, Sony has screwed itself by making something that is by all means truly revolutionary, but is going to pay the price because of what it takes to make such a machine. In today's market, it is pretty much unacceptable to pay over $250 for a console , and even that is plenty enough to pay. I'm just worried because when PSX2 launches in America, it'll probably be even more expensive.

Darren Lasso
lassinator@hotmail.com

Actually, most consoles come down in price when they launch in the US, but more importantly, you're not the only one who knows that a $400 console won't sell no matter what. Sony knows too. If there is any way to launch PlayStation 2 at a mass-market price ($299 or below), it will happen. But you're right: if Sony can't launch under that price, it could find itself losing its console lead.

I've just read on your web site that the PlayStation 2 is going to be launched in January in Japan for $400!

Sega's latest frontier

EverQuest and *Ultima Online* were hyped years before release. Why are Turbine and/or Sega being so stingy with *Frontier* info? Being a console gamer and roleplayer, I am very interested in the game.

Justin Shadwell
mr_twist_999@yahoo.com

Unfortunately, Sega is staying tight-lipped on the game, probably because the company simply does not yet have all its ducks in a row online-wise — while web-browsing capabilities are in Dreamcast now, the server structures for online games have not been established (the Japanese server structure is totally cost-prohibitive in the US, unless you'd be willing to make a long-distance call to Sega every time you wanted to play online). But here's what we can say about Frontier: it's a massively multiplayer science-fiction roleplaying game with a huge world — much bigger than EverQuest or Ultima Online's — which will probably run under Windows CE, and will probably share a lot of code with Turbine's Asheron's Call, currently in beta testing. We're twisting arms at Sega and Turbine as you read this, and we should be bringing you more information soon.

■ *Asheron's Call* is fantasy and *Frontier* will be sci-fi, but Turbine hopes to use what it learns with *Asheron's* to make *Frontier* shine

I believe that in order for Sega to be successful with its new system, it needs to make a sequel to one of its great roleplaying games: *Phantasy Star*, *Shining in the Darkness*, *Shining Force*, or *Landstalkers*. Any one of these games would make me want to go out and buy a system. What do you think?

Herschel Greenberg
hgreenberg@hotmail.com

Unfortunately, there's no word on anything in the Shining *series coming, but the original* Phantasy Star *team is at work on an RPG for Dreamcast. In the meantime, Ubi Soft is bringing* Evolution *to the US this fall.*

In your 09/99 issue, in the *Castlevania: Resurrection* preview, it starts off saying that "if Mario vs. Bowzer is the oldest rivalry in videogaming . . ." Isn't Mario vs. Donkey Kong the oldest?

John
jonjem@usa.net

Interesting point, but since Mario and Donkey Kong each have their own franchises now, it's tough to still call them rivals, except in Mario Kart *and* Smash Bros. *That said, there's no other error for us to torture someone over in the issue, so to remind Tom of the original* Donkey Kong, *we've put him in a oil-soaked barrel, set it on fire, and crushed it with a massive sledge hammer. We hope this satisfies you.*

There has been a lot written about *Final Fantasy VIII*, and in just about every article I found the word "gag" or something similar after the mention that the main theme in the game is love. Any 16-year-old who still cringes at the sight of the word "love" must really have been spending too much of his time with TV. I think many of the growing buyers who are turning toward this new medium would rather there be more games like this.

Montyizxc@aol.com

Interesting point, but lots of people who can handle loving relationships still want to gag when they see the incredibly melodramatic crap that passes for storylines in a lot of RPGs. We've got no problem with love or love interests in games — they're probably a lot more healthy than "kill everything" storylines — but our problem with FFVIII *was that the creators didn't seem to know how to handle the love in the engaging way we've come to expect from Square's storytelling. We said it before, and we'll say it again: you'd think, in a love story, that at some point someone would say "I love you."*

Oh, simple reader...

In your recent issue's Retroview section, you had a cover from 1985. I thought your magazine started in 1995? Is there any way I can get back issues from the 1980s? Just curious.

Brian Williams
Detroit, MI

Uh . . . um . . . (OK, we confess, we have no idea how to go with this response. Sarcastic? Condescending? Sincere? Let's just toy with him, shall we?) OK . . . Actually, Brian, those early issues were, um, limited hardcover editions, so very few exist. You might try eBay, but otherwise, if you want to keep current with what was happening with* Next Generation *"back in the day," keep reading Retroview™.

Next Generation Letters,
150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005.
Email us: ngonline@imaginemedia.com
Note: email is vastly, vastly preferred

Retroview

November 1978

Kill the head and the body grows stronger: Atari hits its stride

The real world was in turmoil, and the game world was, too — less than two years after selling Atari to Time Warner, Nolan Bushnell, the man who helped start the game industry, was gone from the company he founded. Bushnell, who would go on to even greater success (for a time), with the Chuck E. Cheese pizza parlor/arcade chain, left just as some of Atari's greatest games, such as *Asteroids*, were about to be released.

Bushnell's departure couldn't help Magnavox's Odyssey^2. Developed by *Pong* creator Ralph Baer (a man Nolan Bushnell once introduced as the "real father of the game industry"), the system seemed to have everything it needed — a keyboard, and better hardware than the 2600 — but it ultimately would prove to be Magnavox's last entry in the world of videogames.

■ ***Asteroids*** **stormed the arcades, and for a time, vector graphics were king**

For consumers, though, this was rapidly becoming the golden age of the 2600 — more and better games were being released, and soon arcade favorites like *Space Invaders* and, yes, *Asteroids* would be coming home.

What we were playing

An age doesn't get more classic than this

■ **BREAKOUT 2600**

■ System: Atari 2600
■ Publisher: Atari
■ Developer: Atari

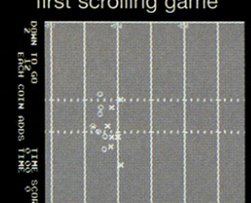
■ **SPACE INVADERS**

■ System: Arcade
■ Publisher: Atari
■ Developer: Atari

■ **ADVENTURELAND**

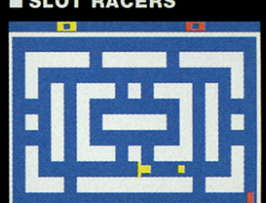
■ System: TRS-80
■ Publisher: Adventure Int'l
■ Developer: Adventure Int'l

■ **ATARI FOOTBALL**
first scrolling game



■ System: Arcade
■ Publisher: Atari
■ Developer: Atari

■ **SLOT RACERS**



■ System: Atari 2600
■ Publisher: Atari
■ Developer: Atari

Primetime lineup 1978

TUESDAY

	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00
CBS	The Fitzpatricks	The Fitzpatricks	M*A*S*H	One Day at a Time	Lou Grant
NBC	Richard Pryor Show	Richard Pryor Show	Mulligan's Stew	Mulligan's Stew	Police Woman
ABC	Happy Days	Laverne & Shirley	Three's Company	Soap	Family

THURSDAY NIGHT

	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00
CBS	The Waltons	The Waltons	Hawaii 5-0	Hawaii 5-0	Barnaby Jones
NBC	CHiPs	CHiPs	Man from Atlantis	Man from Atlantis	Rosetti and Ryan
ABC	Welcome Back Kotter	What's Happening	Barney Miller	Carter Country	Redd Fox Comedy Hour

...and in the real world

■ **The 5 1/4 inch floppy becomes standard as Apple, Tandy, and Commodore announce their support for the high-capacity format (Apple disks hold 144K).**

■ **The first "test tube" baby, Louise Brown, is born in England.**

■ **Hundreds of people living at Love Canal, New York, see their property values plummet when it turns out their neighborhood has been built atop a massively hazardous toxic-waste dump.**

■ **People's Temple leader Jim Jones leads a mass suicide/massacre, claiming the lives of himself and over 900 followers at Jonestown in Guyana, hours after gunning down Congressman Leo Ryan, who was investigating the cult.**

NextGen
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■ **Contact**
NEXT GENERATION
Imagine Media, Inc.
150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane CA 94005

EDITORIAL
voice: 415. 468. 4684 fax: no faxes, please
email: ngonline@imaginemedia.com

ADVERTISING
voice: 415. 468. 4684 x 100 fax: 415. 468. 4686
email: robin@imaginemedia.com

If you have questions about a subscription, please contact: Customer Service
P.O. Box 53680, Boulder, CO 80322
800. 678. 3643 • custserv@next-generation.com
http://service.imaginemedia.com/support/ng/index.html

■ **Editorial**
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SARAH ELLERMAN ■ managing editor
TOM RUSSO ■ senior editor
JEFF LUNDRIGAN ■ reviews editor
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MIKE WILMOTH ■ senior art director
MONIQUE MARTINEZ ■ assistant art director
AARON JOHN LOEB ■ editor-in-chief, NG Online
NICOLAS DI COSTANZO ■ Japanese correspondent

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS
Colin Campbell, Buck DeFore, Nigel Edge, Daniel Erickson, John Lee, Mike Mika, Frank O'Connor, Greg Orlando, Adam Pavlacka, Jorg Tittel, Doug Trueman, Greg Vederman, Marcus Webb, Jeremy Williams, Jeffrey Adam Young (Rob Smith was omitted last month. Sorry, guy.)

For reprints call The Reprint Dept. 717. 481. 8500

■ **Advertising**
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CHRISTOPHER BOILY ■ newsstand mktg. analyst
KRISTI CHEZUM ■ billing and renewal manager

INTERNATIONAL LICENSING REPRESENTATIVE
Robert J. Abramson and Associates, Inc.
720 Post Road, Scarsdale, New York 10583

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

If you're on the editorial staff, you're just not going to get photo credit. Period. Next Generation staff photographers would like to thank Polaroid for the Instamatic. We hear there's some new thing called "Digital Cameras," where the pictures don't even have to dry first. Our best friend/arch-rival the Rubber Fish says that waving the prints in the air will not develop them any faster. We regulary slam his rubber head in the filing cabinet drawer. Really. Welcome "Monisha," know that no one gets outta here alive. Voles!

imagine MEDIA WITH PASSION

IMAGINE MEDIA, INC.,
150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005
(415) 468-4684 www.imaginemedia.com

CHRIS ANDERSON CEO
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Imagine Media is aimed at people who have a passion. A passion for games. For ordering excessive numbers of DVDs online. For making fun of pretentious web designers who think what they're doing is cutting edge (Hey Andre, try building a 3D world inhabited by AI bots.) You get the idea. These are passions we share, along with Thursday evenings for the NG Book Club/*Quake* Clan meeting. Our goal is to feed your passion with the greatest magazines, and web sites, in the Western Hemisphere.

We love to innovate, we love to have fun, and we have a cast-iron rule always to deliver spectacular editorial value. That means doing whatever it takes to give you the information you need. With any luck, we'll even make you smile sometimes.

Thanks for joining us. Next Generation's passion for games extends beyond everything — even editorial deadlines. Today's favorites: *Drakan*, *Q3 Test*, *Unreal Tournament*, and *Dino Crisis*.

BackwardsCompatible

Word on the street is that the three launch titles for this system will be *Pokémon Mauve*, *Pokémon Teal*, and *Pokémon Puce*. Page 8. **A little bit of bartending knowledge can go a long way. See how we plan to turn our interns into an army of undead minions who will actually bring us lunch. Page 70.** Staff members feel that this much-vaunted sequel should be subtitled: *Electric Boogaloo*. Of course, any game with a "2" in the title pretty much follows this rule. Page 123. (What we were hoping for next: PlayStation2: Electric Boogaloo.) **Since 1990, enquiring minds have wanted to know: Are there too many ninjas in games today? Page 134.** This is the best-looking game on a home system today. Care to see for yourself? Page 112. **If you were casting a movie, which actress would play The Fairy Godmother of Game Development? We don't know either (Natalie Portman?), but we know what she'd bring. Page 96.** *Zelda Kart*? *Zelda Team Racing*? Whatever you want to call it, it's on page 60. **Who really *would* win in a fight? The hardcore know. Do you? Page 27.** Every game we've reviewed based on this license has gotten one star. Is the fourth time a charm? We've got our fingers crossed on page 86. **Shopping list for March '99: Mountain Dew, No-Doz, frappucinos, and the game on page 66.** Don't you just hate it when someone calls and interrupts you in the middle of a game? Well how about when a game calls and interrupts you in the middle of real life? Page 52. **They may be weird and freaky, but these screenshots represent the next step forward for PC graphics. Page 14. This is reportedly the highest number of polygons ever used in a realtime spider-crab-bat thing.** The closest we've ever come to a centerfold? Page 44. **We can't believe you've made it this far without reading the cover story. Go immediately if not sooner to page 30. Thank you, and good night.**

NextMonth **The Big Fight**

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